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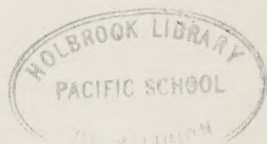
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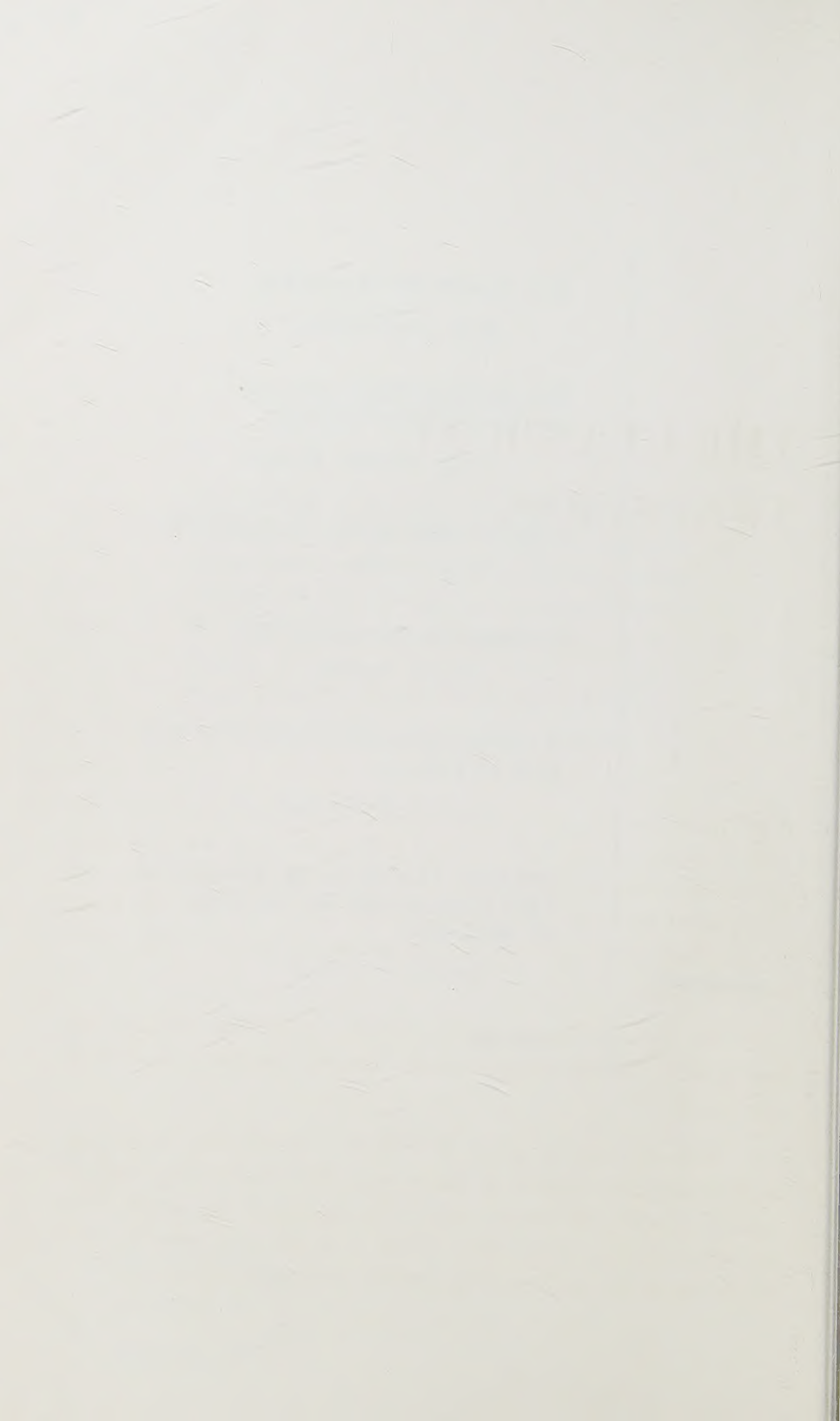
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# THE CLASSICAL TRADITION

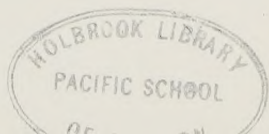
ANDRE MICHALOPOULOS

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THERE IS NO GREATER FALLACY than the belief that the classics of ancient Greece and Rome are but the dead leaves of a remote and forgotten past. On the contrary they are the parent roots of our western civilization: the sap still flows from them and vitalizes the branches of an age-long, ever-verdant tree.

The basic values set by the Greeks thirty centuries ago are permanent human values which western peoples still cherish and apply.

The continuing spirit of Hellenic civilization is perhaps more easily perceptible to the people of Greece today than to peoples farther removed from the scene of its origin. The splendor of line and color which is a glory of the Grecian landscape is the same which inspired Aristophanes to sing:





*Clouds, ever drifting in air  
Rise, O dewy anatomies, shine to the world in splendor.  
Upward from thundering Ocean who fathered us  
rise, make way to the forested pinnacles.*

*There let us gaze upon  
summits aerial opening under us;  
Earth most holy, and fruits of our watering;  
rivers melodious, rich in divinity;  
seas, deep-throated, of echo reverberant.  
Rise, for his Eye, many-splendored, unwearying,  
burns in the front of Heaven.  
Shake as a cloak from our heavenly essences  
vapor and rain, and at Earth in our purity  
with far-seeing eye let us wonder.<sup>1</sup>*

The great mountains of Greece still rise in all their majesty, their names unchanged: Pindus, Kyllene, Parnassus, Olympus over which the golden eagle, sacred bird of Zeus, circles in lordly flight.

Athens and Sparta and Corinth and Megara and hundreds of other towns and islands still bear their ancient and honored names, and the pride of long tradition warms the hearts of their citizens. I happen to come from the small town of Aigion on the Corinthian Gulf. Homer, in the *Iliad*, lists it among those which sent ships to Troy. Homer wrote in the ninth century B.C. and the Trojan War was fought four centuries before that. Moreover, it is an incontrovertible fact that Aigon, which means "City of the Goat," was so named, long before the Trojan War, because we produced a goat which nourished with its milk the infant Zeus before he became Father of the Gods.

Not far from my home flows the River Styx, the river of the dead, and, as it disappears into a dark and awesome cavern, you can still hear the barking of the dog Cerberus and the splashing of Charon's oar as he ferries the souls across to the shore of no return.

<sup>1</sup>Clouds, 275-90 transl. T. F. Higham.

In connection with Charon I cannot resist a parenthetical quotation of a poem in the Greek Anthology which illustrates the deep humanity and the love of children which prevailed among the ancient Greeks:

THE LITTLE GHOST

*Ferryman that rowest the barge the buried fare on,  
With all its freight of anguish, across Death's reedy  
mere,  
Give to the child of Cinyras, O gloomy Charon,  
A kindly hand for climbing to thy boat, as he draws  
near.  
For the little one trips in his sandals; yet he will shrink to  
tread  
Barefoot the sandy beaches of the River of the Dead.<sup>2</sup>*

On the crest of the Acropolis, in the center of the "violet-crowned city," the Parthenon still stands, a structure of incomparable beauty, reflecting through the ages the purity and balance and harmony of the Mother of our civilization.

It is not easy for even the most untutored who live amid the ever-present vestiges of such natural and spiritual grandeur to lose sight of the values which it represents.

Since the Age of Enlightenment, which followed in the wake of the Renaissance when Greek culture was revived in Western Europe, until the beginning of the twentieth century, the classics formed the basis of the education of the ruling classes. There was no doubt then in the minds of intellectuals that the values set by Greece and Rome were valid and enduring. When Thomas Jefferson set the pattern for higher education in America by the foundation of the University of Virginia, he clearly intended that the youth of the young Republic should draw their ideals and inspiration from the august models of antiquity. It is to his lasting credit that, setting aside the natural

<sup>2</sup>Zonas of Sardis, transl. F. L. Lucas.



aversion of a revolutionary to things British, he summoned scholars from Oxford to teach Greek and Latin at Charlottesville. That I was reared in this tradition has afforded me the greatest satisfaction in life, and I shall never forget the abbé Guérin, a humble village priest in France, who, when I was eleven years old, introduced me to the magic of Homer and Vergil by making me read them aloud in the original and so teaching me ancient Greek and Latin as *living* languages.

As this century of industrial expansion and scientific discovery advanced, however, the predominant position of the classics in education naturally receded. Thousands of scientific and technological experts became essential to the provision of the daily necessities of a new and materially more complex way of life. The harsh beauty of the machine with its whirring harmony of wheels and cogs, and the positive magic of the mathematical formula threatened to obliterate the values and ideals of less urgent times.

Within the last decade, nevertheless, business men and scientists in America have become increasingly conscious of the importance of the spiritual values of our ancient heritage, and Industry is not only recruiting students of the liberal arts for its organizations, but also expects its technical personnel to be familiar with the basic patterns of our civilization. Thus it is today my very happy privilege, among my other pursuits, to be teaching the classics in an American university dedicated mainly to the training of scientists and technicians.

What are the enduring basic patterns which were set for us by the ancient Greeks?

There were of course great oriental civilizations which flourished before the time of the Greeks and from which they inherited some characteristics, as attested by an oriental strain in primitive Greek art. But these oriental civilizations were static. They were opposed to the positive spirit of western ideology and have remained so to the present day. In the case of Egypt, for example, whose civilization attained great power



and grandeur, all that is left is a chain of imposing colossal and inhuman monuments—a tribute to the power of arrogant and absolute masters over a nation of slaves. The spirit of Egypt is accurately portrayed in Shelly's sonnet to Ozymandias:

*And on the pedestal these words appear:  
'My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings,  
Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair.'  
Nothing beside remains; round the decay  
Of that colossal wreck boundless and bare  
The lone and level sands stretch far away.*

The western spirit in conscious literature originates with Homer. He is the fountainhead of our culture and way of life. The pattern of our ideals emerges clearly out of the dust and confusion of a barbaric war in the melodious cadences of the Homeric hexameter. Of course, Homer is primarily a great poet and a magnificent storyteller, and his narrative moves forward powerfully in obedience to the promptings of his imaginative genius. In the presentation of his theme, both in the *Iliad* and in the *Odyssey*, Homer is in no sense a philosopher or moralist. He is an artist. Indeed his "theology" would shock our sense of religious propriety, did we not know that in his time the indigenous Hellenes paid scant attention to the newly imported gods of Olympus, and that their religious devotion was directed to the Chthonian gods, who were never made light of. Homer, with a humorous twinkle in his eye that was never blind—his magnificent descriptive passages are proof of this—gives us the most delightful glimpses of the Olympian supermen indulging most enviably, and with impunity, in all the human passions as they control the ebb and flow of a senseless war. That Homer considered war senseless is made clear indirectly, and to this extent the *Iliad* points a moral which is definitely Hellenic and western. Throughout the twenty-four books of the *Iliad*, Homer, the Greek, is entirely impartial on the issue of a war between Greeks and Trojans. He is deeply conscious of the

tragedy of the doomed city of Troy, and of the human drama in the individual lives of its princes and people. The epic does not end in triumph for the Greeks, who are left victorious but helpless in a foreign land; it ends (books xxiii & xxiv) in a minor key with an account of a Greek and a Trojan burial—a note of mournful resignation at the utter futility of the whole struggle. Homer is facing a problem that is still with us: his reactions are those of civilized western man.

In my opinion, however, the outstanding characteristic which makes Homer the fountainhead of our civilization is that he is the first to introduce into literature a deliberate element of kindness and compassion. He is not in the least squeamish or sentimental; his war reporting is accurate and down-to-earth, as in this passage:

*From the steep bank he drew his spear and left there  
Asteropaios whom he had slain, lying in the sands, and the  
dark water flooded him. Around him eels and fishes  
swarmed, tearing and gnawing the fat about his kidneys.<sup>3</sup>*

He describes the passions and jealousies which divide the Greek chieftains with consummate psychological skill. But I think that we are most deeply moved by the warmth of his humanity in such scenes as the parting of Hector from Andromache and their little son when the Trojan prince goes forth to battle, never to return; or, by the kindness which old King Priam shows toward Helen at a time when the war was going badly for the Trojans and the king's advisers were openly blaming this beautiful Greek princess in their midst as the cause of all their woes. "Come and sit by me, my child," says Priam, "I do not blame thee; rather the gods, or fate do I blame." Deeply moving, too, is the scene in which old Priam goes to the tent of Achilles to beg for the body of his slain son and kneels down before the conqueror and kisses 'those murderous hands', and Achilles, seized with compassion, raises the old man up and comforts him. Over and over again, in this tale of force and

<sup>3</sup>Transl. Leaf, Lang and Myers.

violence, do we meet with flashes, such as these, which display a quality of almost Christian mercy in the poet. These are lasting western values which we recognize with amazement and warm gratification in this epic of the ninth century B.C.

Again, there is an air of equality and freedom breathing through the Iliad and Odyssey. Chieftains and warriors, heroes and men, are equals on the human level. There is a free-and-easy spirit of camaraderie among them which we readily recognize as part of our way of life and which would be incomprehensible, for instance, to a Hitler or a Stalin. Homer is as free and vast and ample as his "unharvested sea."

Four centuries after Homer, Greek civilization had achieved its splendid maturity. The age of Aeschylus, Pericles, Phidias, Sophocles, Euripides and Plato gave birth to the most balanced culture the world has ever known, and western civilization acquired therefrom its permanent standards and values.

The part played by the Athenian theater in molding these standards and values is worthy of note. The people of Athens did not go to the theater merely to be entertained. They were not intrigued by the intricacy of a plot, for the action and ending of each drama were familiar to them. The theme was taken from the often gruesome legends of remote antiquity. Everyone knew, before the play began, that Oedipus would end up by gouging out his eyes and Jocasta would hang herself. What the audience went to see and hear was how the playwright of the day would treat a subject already presented by many of his colleagues before him. More specifically, they wanted to learn what lesson, religious, moral or political, was to be drawn from the presentation. Thus, in the great Greek tragedies that have come down to us we have an almost complete picture of the great problems to which a solution was being sought in the western world of twenty-five centuries ago. The same problems, in great measure, are still with us today, and the manner in which the Greeks tackled them is by no means alien to our way of thinking.



Perhaps nothing could better demonstrate the affinity which exists between the ancient Athenian concept of democracy and our own than the following paragraph taken from a speech made in 429 B.C. by Pericles:

*Our form of government does not enter into rivalry with the institutions of others. We do not copy our neighbors, but are an example to them. It is true that we are called a democracy, for the administration is in the hands of the many and not of the few. But while the law secures equal justice to all alike in their private disputes, the claim of excellence is recognized; and when a citizen is in any way distinguished, he is preferred to the public service, not as a matter of privilege but as the reward of merit. Neither is poverty a bar, but a man may benefit his country whatever be the obscurity of his condition.<sup>4</sup>*

These words, without the change of a single comma, might have fallen from the lips of Jefferson, Lincoln or Eisenhower. They reflect the continuing ideology of the democratic west, and since we see that they had their roots in ancient Greece, what better argument could be found in favor of the study of the great prototypes of our civilization?

<sup>4</sup>Transl. Benjamin Jowett.



# THE ROLE OF THE LAYMAN IN THE ANCIENT CHURCH\*

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THE AUTHORITY of Kenneth Scott Latourette may be ad-  
duced for the fact that the lay members of the ancient  
churches were not conspicuous for sustained missionary activity  
either at home or as itinerants:

*It would probably be a misconception [he writes] to think of every Christian of the first three hundred years after Christ as aggressively seeking converts. Such pictures as we have of these early communities in the New Testament . . . warrant no such conclusion. In none of them does any hint occur that the rank and file of Christians regarded it as even a minor part of their duty to communicate their faith to others.<sup>1</sup>*

\*Paper read before the working party gathered by the Department on the Laity of the World Council of Churches, New Haven, Connecticut, July 21, 1957. It is being concurrently published in somewhat reduced form in *The Ecumenical Review*, X (1958), 225-248.

<sup>1</sup>*The Mission and Expansion of Christianity*, I (New York/London, 1937), 117.

But if none rose up with the same vocation as the first apostles and evangelists, the fact remains that the expansion of Christianity in the hostile environment of the first three centuries, and its eventual conquest of the seats of political authority has ever since been considered so phenomenal as to be one of the clearest proofs of the divine credentials of this new people, this third race under God, neither Jew nor Barbarian.<sup>2</sup> Despite Latourette's stricture, we instinctively feel, even though the documentation is meagre, that the witness in life and death of unnamed multitudes of lay members contributed as much to the spread of Christianity as the writing and preaching and the valiant martyrdom of their more articulate clerical leaders.<sup>3</sup> For all Christians were aware of being, not only a third race, the peculiar people of God the Lord of Hosts, but also a royal priesthood (I Peter 2:9; Rev. 1:6) with a divine commission to bring salvation to the whole world. Hence the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers emerges as a basic concept for the interpretation of the laymen in the ancient Church and their mission.

Significantly, most of the major work in the last score of years on what has been commonly thought of as a basically Protestant emphasis in ecclesiology has been done by Roman Catholic scholars, notably in France and Belgium. It was manifest from the first that irenic, ecumenically minded Catholics could find in a *liturgical* reconception of "Luther's doctrine" the means of establishing a congenial point of contact with Protestantism while at the same time rectifying, as they also openly acknowledged, the disproportionate clerical emphasis which had come in with Tridentine Catholicism. In these numerous and often very moving studies, most of them dogmatico-historical with a good deal of reference to recent papal pronouncements, the great hope expressed is that Catholic laymen

<sup>2</sup>On the missionary significance of this conviction, see Emanuel Kellerhals, "Das dritte Geschlecht," *Evangelisches Missions-Magazin*, XL (1946), 101, 133.

<sup>3</sup>There is considerable incidental material on lay witness and lay evangelism in the very useful and attractive account by John Foster, *After the Apostles: Missionary Preaching of the First Three Centuries* (London: S.P.C.K., 1951).

## *The Role of the Layman in the Ancient Church*

will recover their ancient place in the liturgy, in Christian action, and in what is commonly called today the lay apostolate.<sup>4</sup> Yet even here, when the missionary role of the ancient layman comes under scrutiny, the Catholic writer, like the Protestant, is restrained in his deductions because of the paucity of documentation.<sup>5</sup>

All this is to say that we shall therefore examine *all* the functions of the ancient layman, content with an occasional glimpse of specifically missionary lay activity as it may open up for us in the sparse documentation.

Our understanding of the laity will be shaped, not primarily in terms of ordination and the lack thereof, nor of theological education and the relative want thereof, but rather in terms of

<sup>4</sup>See "The Lay Apostolate in the Roman Catholic Church," *Laity*, I (February, 1956). The most comprehensive study is that of Yves M. J. Congar, *Jalons pour une théologie du laïcat* (Paris, 1954 [American translation, 1957]). A more popular presentation, in part inspired by Congar, is that of Gérard Philips, *The Role of the Laity in the Church*, translated from the French by J. R. Gilbert and J. W. Moudry (Chicago, 1956). Paul Dabin, prematurely taken by death, had prepared the way with two companion collections of documents and commentary in *Le sacerdoce royal des fidèles dans les livres saints* (Paris, 1941) and *Le sacerdoce royal des fidèles dans la tradition ancienne et moderne* (Brussels/Paris, 1950). Earlier, in the midst of widespread disaffection from Rome among Belgian workers and intellectuals, Dabin had inaugurated his life's work with the programmatic *L'Apostolat laïque* (1933). Other Catholic writings, dogmatic and canonistic, and contemporary more than historical in character, may be mentioned: Engelbert Niebecker, *Das allgemeine Priestertum der Gläubigen* (Paderborn, 1936); G. Thils, "De taak van de leek in onze opfating van de Kerk," *Het christelijk Oosten en Hereniging* (1949); N. Rocholl, *Vom Laienpriestertum* (Paderborn, 1940); P. F. Palmer, "The Laical Priesthood: Real or Metaphysical?" *Theological Studies*, VIII (1947), 574ff.; Ernst Rösser, *Die Stellung der Laien in der Kirche nach dem kanonischen Recht* (Würzburg, 1949); Rudolph Müller-Erb, "Der Laie in der Kirche," *Theologische Quartalschrift*, CXXX (1950), 184-196; O. Kohler, "Der Laie im katholischen Kirchenrecht," *Stimmen der Zeit* (April, 1950); Oswald von Nell-Bruening and H. Keller, *Das Recht der Laien in der Kirche* (Heidelberg, 1950); E. Boularand, "Sacerdoce de l'Eglise, sacerdoce du baptisé," *Revue d'Ascétique et de Mystique*, XXXII (1956), 361.

The corresponding Orthodox studies and statements are as follows: N. Afanasev, *Sluzhenie miryan v Tserkvi* [The Lay Authority in the Church] (Paris, 1955); for Greece primarily: I. Kotsōnēs, *Hē Thesis tōn laïkōn* (Athens, 1956), which draws heavily on the councils and canon law, and Panagiōtes Trempelas, *Hoi Laïkoi en tēi ekklesiāi* (Athens, 1957); for Russian Orthodoxy: L. N. Parijskij, "Die Rolle des Laien im Leben der Russisch-Orthodoxen Kirche," *Kirche in der Zeit*, XII (1957), 12-16; and the same from a Western point of view, Bernhard Schultze, S. J., "Die byzantinisch-slawische Theologie über den Dienst der Laien in der Kirche," *Ostkirchliche Studien*, V (1956), 243ff.

<sup>5</sup>For example, J. Bauer has to make do with inferences from a commentary by Theodoret when he deals specifically with our theme, the only such title I have come across. "Die Missionspflicht des einzelnen nach der Lehre vom mystischen Leib Christi," *Theologische—Praktische Quartalschrift*, CI (1953), 296.

the Church gathered for worship, instruction, and deliberation (*ekklesia*) over against the equally important "church" diffused or scattered or seeded in the work-a-day world (*diaspora*) as leaven in the lump (not as wheat among tares!).<sup>6</sup> On this view even the ordained cleric is, in a sense, in his action as husbandman and citizen a "laic." As it turns out, however, *we* shall not be able to slight the role of the laity in *ekklesia* as distinguished from the laity in *diaspora*, because our largely clerical sources give us relatively little about laymen outside the meeting!

We shall limit our sketch of the evolution of the layman in *ekklesia* and in *diaspora* from Pentecost to the end of the persecutions.<sup>7</sup> The recognition of Christianity by Constantine, as for so much else in church history, clearly ends a period in the evolution of the laity as a true order (*taxis*) with its own often distinctive liturgical, constitutional, disciplinary, eleemosynary, and witnessing role; and marks the climax of the gradual differentiation of the *laos tou theou* into laity and clergy, and the accompanying atrophy of lay functions.

At three points is the position of the laity markedly different in the ante- and the post-Nicene epochs. In the very first days of the Church's self-consciousness as a new people set apart, the whole of the Church as the *laos tou theou* was seen over against the people of the old covenant, while the baptismal recruits were understood to have entered into a priestly kingdom, neither Jew nor Gentile, no longer in bondage to the world about them, yet servants of the King to come. Then, with the maturation of subapostolic Christianity, this historico-theological conviction made room for the functional differentiation between the clerical officers of the priestly people of

<sup>6</sup>The contrast *ekklesia-diaspora* has been suggested by Hans-Ruedi Weber in "The Church in the House," *Laity*, No. 3, April, 1957.

<sup>7</sup>This treatment parallels another study, made by the author, of the evolution of the clergy in the ante-Nicene period. *The Ministry in Historical Perspectives*, H. Richard Niebuhr and Daniel Williams, eds. (New York, 1956), ch. ii.



## *The Role of the Layman in the Ancient Church*

God and the unordained faithful\* in a process which was completed before the end of the persecutions and which was indeed abetted by them. The bishop had become an awesome monarch. The orders of church discipline expressly call him *basileus* and *rex*. Finally, with the conversion of Constantine and the Christianization of his office, Christianity in the period of the great councils found itself contrasting not clergy and laity as in the ante-Nicene period, but clergy and the chief of the laity, namely, the Christian emperor. The sudden emergence of a layman preeminent above all the rest and overshadowing even the bishops of the great sees of Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, and presently Constantinople, found the Church in her manuals of discipline, in her liturgy, and in her theology insufficiently prepared to cope with the imperious royal-priestly claims of the Christianized head of state; and thus, while depressing still further the role of ordinary laymen, she for the most part acquiesced in accepting the sacral authority of the Christian emperor. Eusebius styled Constantine *episkopos ton ektos*. The Council of Chalcedon hailed Marcian as at once priest, king, and *didaskalos tēs ekklēsias*.

The first difference, then, between the ante- and the post-Nicene situation in respect to the laity is that, where Christians had once worked out their tensions in terms of priesthood and laity, in the Constantinian era they fought it out in terms of Church and State, that is, specifically, as episcopate over against sacral kingship. The "lay" ascetics, on becoming organized in the fourth century as coenobites, almost alone perpetuated in the age of imperial favor the ethos of the *militia Christi* of the days of persecution. Nevertheless, though monks (in the East, up to modern times) have been, for the most part, laymen on the matter of ordination, they have not been laymen in the sense of participating in the life of the world in *diaspora*, and

\*The differentiation here stressed need not be taken to imply a primitively amorphous or fully "democratic" church. The strict gradations within the "oligarchic-democratic" Dead Sea Community with priests and Levites throw light on the distribution of authority in the constitution of the Primitive Church. On this see Bo Reicke, "The Constitution of the Primitive Church," *The Scrolls and the New Testament*, Krister Stendahl, ed. (New York, 1957), ch. x; translated from *Theologische Zeitschrift*, X (1954), 95-113.

therefore they will not be taken into consideration in what follows.

A second point of difference between the two epochs is the complete clericalization, by the opening of the fourth century, of all the outstanding functions in the Church from doorkeeper to bishop, the assimilation of these several degrees of the clergy to the *cursus honorum* of civil administration, and the concurrent shriveling (at least in the West) of the older feeling that one might serve for life as deacon, lector, or exorcist without aspiring to a higher degree. The professionalizing of all the churchly functions concurrent with the withdrawal of the ascetics into the wilderness left little dignity in the ordinary lay status. With the cessation of persecution the layman was not even called upon to witness to his faith, unless it be in the riots between the various Arian and the orthodox parties.<sup>9</sup> To be reduced to the indignity of receiving lay communion was a common form of punishment meted out to post-Nicene bishops.

Another aspect of the clericalization of most of the big and little functions of the Church was the virtually complete assimilation of teaching and healing in the office of the bishop with delegated catechists under his supervision. Earlier, teaching and healing had been free or charismatic. In the ante-Nicene period the teachers had indeed formed a "choir" (*choros*) alongside the clergy and thus were, in one sense at least, laical.

The third and most important difference between the two epochs and directly connected with the sudden imperial or "ecumenical" assignment laid upon the Church, was the recruitment of a new type of convert and the loss of the pre-Constantinian feeling for a radical distinction between church and world.

During the period of the persecutions when some of the secrets of the faith were guarded by the faithful even from

<sup>9</sup>I have given some attention to the role of the faithful, Christophorous laity in "Christology and Church-State Relations in the Fourth Century," *Church History*, XX (1951), No. 3 and No. 4.

## *The Role of the Layman in the Ancient Church*

prospective converts (the *disciplina arcana*), the laity was clearly an order not to be confused with the catechumenate and still less with the "world." With the rapid expansion of Christianity consequent upon imperial favor, however, the laity tended to be assimilated with the turbulent masses<sup>10</sup> of the city population, and the bishop, from being the liturgical representative of the whole royal priesthood, became the quasi-civic spokesman of the largely disfranchised citizenry of the late imperial municipalities. Because secrecy was no longer essential as once to the intensely disciplined *militia Christi* (constituting a veritable *imperium in imperio*), the catechumens, from the homes of both pagans and old Christian families, no longer withdrew at the Mass of the faithful, while even committed pagans might, without drawing attention to themselves, enter the new basilicas that were arising everywhere under imperial patronage and listen to the new oratory of the Christian pulpit. Chrysostom, for example, deplores the consequent recession of a sense of participation and liturgical responsibility which the theater-like character of basilican worship had induced in the laity. He movingly retraces the full meaning of the royal priesthood of God in which cleric and laic are on the same level, alike in the eucharistic offering and the communion, in the prayers for mutual fortification in Christ, and in the disciplinary functions of the church. Thereupon he challenges his congregation:

*Now I have said all this in order that each one of the laity also may keep his attention awake, that we may understand that we are all one body, having such difference amongst ourselves, as members with members; and may not throw the whole upon the priests; but ourselves also so care for the whole church, as for a body common to us.*<sup>11</sup>

To summarize this third point, in the post-Nicene Church, the layman was, despite exhortations and convictions like those

<sup>10</sup>Well illustrated in canon 13 of the council of Laodicea (mid-fourth century) which deprives the *oeklos* of their right of participation in the election of priests exercised by the *laos* in the days of persecution.

<sup>11</sup>In *II Cor. hom.*, xviii, 3.

of Chrysostom, brought down to the level of the catechumen or even the casually interested pagan, whereas in the days of persecution the laity had been clearly set off by baptismal "ordination" from the catechumenate; and even within the company of the baptized and confirmed laity there had been gradations moving imperceptibly from teachers and lay *seniores*<sup>12</sup> on the male side and "enrolled widows" and deaconesses on the female side, through confessors who were often honorary presbyters, up to the not yet fully clericalized so-called "lower orders." Moreover, still other groupings within the laity were keenly felt despite Paul's asseverations about the oneness of the body and the tearing down of the wall of separation; for example, the natural distinctions of male and female, young and old, the cultural distinctions of rural and urban, of slave and free, of propertied and poor, and the moral distinctions of the penitent and the steadfast, of those ignobly and those acceptably employed in the work of the world.

Before going on to discuss further the nature and functions of the pre-Constantinian laity, we must first ascertain the theological conception of the rank of the layman in the Church; and for this purpose we may adduce evidence beyond the confines of the meagre documentation on this head from the first three centuries.

#### LAITY, LAICS, LAYMEN

Henceforth we shall render in English the diverse Greek and Latin nomenclature for laymen as follows: for *laos* (*tou theou*) and *plebs*, "the laity"; for the nominative *laikos* and *laicus*, "laic"; and for the adjectival form, "lay" men or women.

Clement of Rome was the first to use *lay man*, about A.D. 95, concluding his brief reference to the participants in the liturgy with the assertion: "... the lay man is bound by the lay ordinances."<sup>13</sup> Thus a first stage in the Christian specialization of *laos* and its derivatives was connected with the corporate

<sup>12</sup>See below, nn. 48-51.

<sup>13</sup>I Clement, 40, 5.



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thanksgiving of the Church, the eucharist. Laics in their eucharistic role of bringing in the bread, wine, and other offerings were commonly called *prospheronτες*. It is significant that the generic term for the non-clerical members of the Church is intimately related, by way of I Peter 2:9, with the eucharist. For in this *locus classicus* of the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers the royal priesthood (*basileion hierateuma*), God's own *laos*, is thought of as engaged in the corporate but spiritual sacrifice of the eucharist.<sup>11</sup> Not only are Christians the new Israel, says the preacher of the baptismal sermon, but also the only authorized or effectual priesthood. Corporately they are the successors of the priesthood in old Israel, having been vouchsafed the right of *corporate* but otherwise direct access to God through the unbloody or spiritual or rational sacrifice of thanksgiving made possible through Christ. Justin Martyr restated the principle of the priesthood of all believers when he wrote: ". . . being inflamed by the word of His [Christ's] calling, we are the true high-priestly race of God."<sup>12</sup> The Athenian apologist Aristides asserted that all Christians could trace their genealogy from the High Priest Jesus Christ.<sup>13</sup> And Irenaeus in Gaul could say: "All who are justified through Christ have the sacerdotal order."<sup>14</sup>

"Ordination" to the laity was effected by the sacrament of baptism and the accompanying unction (later, in part,

<sup>11</sup>Traditional Catholic and critical Protestant scholarship have until recently joined, from diverse impulses, to spiritualize, interiorize, and individualize the meaning of the sacrifice in I Peter 2:5 and 9, minimizing its setting in a baptismal homily, presumably connected with the first communion of neophytes; hence, its *liturgical* significance has been obscured. Edward G. Selwyn, though conservative on the matter of the authorship of the epistle, sees clearly the eucharistic significance of the priesthood of the *laos*. *The First Epistle of St. Peter* (London, 1848), 295ff. On the priesthood of all believers, besides works cited in n. 4, the following specifically on the doctrine in antiquity may be mentioned here: J. Lécuyer, "Essai sur le sacerdoce des fidèles chez les Pères," *La Maison Dieu*, XXVII (1951/3), 7-50; *idem*, "Le sacerdoce royale des Chrétiens selon saint Hilaire de Poitiers," *L'Année Théologique*, IV (1949), 302-325.

<sup>12</sup>*Dial. c. Tryph.*, cxvi.

<sup>13</sup>*Apol.*, ii (in the Syriac version which is closest to the original Greek text) and xv (in the adapted Greek text).

<sup>14</sup>"Omnes enim iusti sacerdotalem habent ordinem." *Contr. Haer.* iv, 8, 3. The original Greek text has not survived. It is instructive that John of Damascus, when he cites this passage, alters Irenaeus' wording when he writes: "Every righteous king has the sacerdotal order."

differentiated as the sacrament of confirmation). In the baptismal unction catechumens were enrolled in the royal (and prophetic) priesthood, for it was likewise by anointment that Israel's kings and priests had been consecrated. Tertullian stresses the priestly character of baptismal unction when he writes:

*Thereupon as we come forth from the laver, we are anointed with the holy unction, just as in the Old Dispensation priests were anointed with oil from the horn of the altar. Whence the term Christus, from the chrism which is the anointing, a name that is now appropriated to the Lord.*<sup>18</sup>

Tertullian held that baptismal "ordination" qualified the recipient of grace to baptize in his turn, for "what is equally received can be equally given."<sup>19</sup> At the same time, before joining the Montanists, he argued for the sake of order that what was lawful might not be expedient, that lay *men* only should perform the sacrament and only in the absence of a cleric and that lay women should never presume to baptize in any circumstance.

Although the indelibility of baptism was long in dispute in the ante-Nicene Church in connection with the admission of heretics and schismatics, the theological ideal of an indelible character came firmly to undergird the three sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and ordination. Jerome states this view precisely in our terms in connection with the return of a penitent to the bosom of the Church. He places his understanding of it on the lips of an orthodox arguing with a follower of Lucifer of Cagliari who has insisted that repentant Arian bishops must be reordained, whereupon the orthodox asks, knowing there can by this time be only one answer:

<sup>18</sup>*De baptismo*, 7.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, 17.

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*Does the penitent lay aside the priesthood of the laic (sacerdotium laici), that is, of baptism, and only then do I pardon him? For it is written [Rev. 1:6]: "He has made us a kingdom and priests to God His Father," and again [I Peter 2:9]: "a holy nation, royal priesthood, a purchased people."<sup>20</sup>*

Many other post-Nicene writers may be adduced for the later patristic formulation of both the moral (royal) priesthood of all believers and more specifically the "cultural power of the baptized." The monk Hesychius, presbyter in Jerusalem (d. c. 450), in his gloss on Isaiah 61:6: "... but you shall be called priests of the Lord," amplified as follows: "All the faithful, because the baptized are anointed with sacerdotal chrism."<sup>21</sup> Isidore of Pelusium (d. c. 435) wrote in commenting on Rom. 12:1 that "every [Christian] is ordained (*kecheirotontai*) priest of his own body."<sup>22</sup> Nestorian Narsai (head of the school of Edessa, 437) movingly declared that "To this end He [Christ] gave the priesthood to the new priests ["the new people"] that [all] might be made priests to *forgive* iniquity on earth."<sup>23</sup> Particularly influential in the West have been the statements of Augustine and Leo I of Rome. And Augustine, quoting Rev. 1:6, goes on: "... as we call all believers Christians on account of the mystical chrism, so we call all believers priests because they are members of the one Priest."<sup>24</sup> Leo, in his Sermon IV in commemoration of his elevation to the episcopate, cited I Peter 2:5,9 in support of his conviction that the whole of the Christian *plebs* are identified with the action of Christ in the priestly action at the altar.

On the *prophetic* role as well as on the royalty and the priesthood of every baptismally anointed laic, coheir of Christ,

<sup>20</sup>*Dial. contr. Lucif.*, 4. On indelibility, see also Pseudo-Maximus of Turin, *De baptismo*, tract. iii, P.L., 57, 777ff.

<sup>21</sup>M. Faulhaber, ed. (Freiburg, 1900), 191.

<sup>22</sup>*Ep.*, lib. iii, 75.

<sup>23</sup>*Liturgical Homilies*, R. A. Connolly, ed., Texts and Studies, VIII, No. 1 (Cambridge, 1909), 63.

<sup>24</sup>*De civ*, xx, 10.

the divinely anointed Priest, Prophet, and King two other post-Nicene Fathers are particularly precise. Says Chrysostom:

*So also art thou thyself made king and priest and prophet in the laver [of baptism]: a king, having dashed to earth all the deeds of wickedness and slain thy sin; a priest, in that thou offerest thyself to God, and in having sacrificed thy body, and in being thyself slain also, for if we died with Him, saith he [Paul, II Tim. 2:11], we shall also live with Him; finally a prophet, knowing what shall be, and being inspired of God (enthous) and sealed. For as upon soldiers a seal, so is also the Spirit put upon the faithful. And if thou desert, thou art manifest by it to all. For the Jews had circumcision for a seal, but we, the earnest of the Spirit. Knowing then all this, and considering our high estate, let us exhibit a life worthy of grace.<sup>25</sup>*

And Aphrahat the Sage of Persia (c. 280-345), after discussing the vision of the grape and vine in Isaiah 65:8 and the tree of knowledge, refers to the healing of the olive trees and suggests that sacramental unction reopens the doors of paradise to the newly baptized:

*But to those seeking peace the door is opened and confusion flees from the mind of many; the light of the mind has begun to shine; the splendid olive trees have produced their fruits in which is the sign of the sacrament of life whereby Christians are made priests, kings, and prophets.<sup>26</sup>*

Besides his ordination as royal priest, the laic in some quarters, notably in the Alexandrian tradition, could aspire to the status of the ideal gnostic, whose gradual, post-baptismal illumination and growth in inner discipline and grace enabled him to go through the *spiritual* grades of deacon, presbyter,

<sup>25</sup>In II Cor. hom., iii, 7.

<sup>26</sup>*Demonstratio*, xxiii, *De acino*, 3; *Patrologia Syrica*, pars prima, Vol. II, col. 10.



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and bishop, some day "to sit down on the four-and-twenty thrones, judging the people," even perhaps the less spiritual clergy (Clement, *Stromata*, vi, 13)!

To sum up, the laic in the ancient Church had an indelible "ordination" as priest, prophet, and king, no longer in bondage to the world, but freed through Christ to know the truth in the illumination of the Spirit, to exercise sovereignty over the inner temple of self, to join in the corporate thanksgiving of the redeemed, and to forgive the brethren in Christ's name.

It will now be our task to ascertain what exactly were the laic's rights and duties, liturgical, constitutional, disciplinary, eleemosynary, and evangelical, in the period before Constantine.

### THE LITURGICAL FUNCTIONS OF LAICS

Clement of Rome, already cited as the first to employ the term *laikos*, made specific what he meant by the "lay ordinances" when he wrote in the next paragraph:

*Let each of us brethren, in his own order make eucharist (eucharisteitō) to God, keeping a good conscience and not transgressing the appointed rule of his liturgy.*<sup>27</sup>

We have two subsequent glimpses of laics at worship in Rome, enabling us to fill out the picture into the third century.

Justin Martyr, in his *Apology* for pagan eyes, remains intentionally general in his account of the eucharist but describes both a baptismal and an ordinary Sunday eucharist, remarking that after the prayers of the liturgical president (the bishop), "all the laity present shouts assent, saying 'Amen'"; and he proceeds to explain the affirmative meaning of the Hebrew.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup>*Op. cit.*, 41.

<sup>28</sup>*Apol.*, I, 65. Cf. I Cor. xiv:16 and Theodoret of Cyrus, *Comm. in II Cor. i*, 20. See P. Rouget, *Amen, Acclamation du peuple sacerdotale* (Paris, 1947).

In talking with Trypho the Jew he can be somewhat more specific about the eucharist and about the role of the laic therein:

*... we are now the true high priestly race of God, as God Himself bears witness [Mal. 1:11], saying that in every place among the Gentiles there are those bringing [prospherontes: almost a technical term for the laics] pure sacrifices acceptable to Him.*

*God therefore has long since borne witness that all sacrifices offered by His name, which Jesus the Christ enjoyed, namely, at the eucharistia of the bread and the cup which are presented in every place on earth by the Christians, are well pleasing to Him. But those that are made by you and by means of those priests of yours He utterly rejects . . . .*<sup>29</sup>

It is clear from this passage that Justin has in mind the liturgy of the whole priestly people and not merely that of the more specialized celebrants.

The later Fathers and theologians following them speak freely of the specialized priesthood of the ordained as derivative from or participant in that of the heavenly High Priest; but with equal propriety one may go on to say that it is both theologically valid and historically sound to see the functional priesthood of bishops and presbyters as derived from the priestly *laos*, since clerics but concentrated in their persons an action that continued to belong to the whole baptismal community of the reborn in Christ.

<sup>29</sup>*Dial. cum Tryph.*, 116f. In language which suggests familiarity with this passage, Origen a century later asks:

Or do you not recognize that the priesthood has been given to you also, that is to the whole Church of God and the nation of believers? . . . You have therefore a priesthood, being a priestly nation, I Pet. ii, 9. Therefore you ought to offer to God a sacrifice of praise, of prayers, of pity, of purity, of righteousness, of holiness. To offer this aright you have need of clean garments, of vestments kept apart from the common clothing of the rest of mankind; and you must have the divine fire, God's own fire which he gives to men, of which the Son of God says, Luke xii:49: 'I have come to send fire on earth.'—*In Levit.*, hom. x, 1.

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Hippolytus, the rigoristic rival of Bishop Callistus of Rome, provides us in his *Apostolic Tradition*, about a half-century after Justin, with another glimpse into the liturgical action of laics. Here we see them as *prospheroentes*, offering at the eucharist not only the bread and the wine, but also occasionally oil, cheese, and olives for eventual distribution. The instructions to the bishop on receiving the oil can be quoted to evoke the whole liturgical scene in Rome c. 200:

*If any one offers oil, he [the bishop] shall make eucharist as at the oblation of bread and wine. But he shall not say word for word [the same prayer] but with similar effect, saying:*

*O God who sanctifiest this oil, as Thou dost grant unto all who are anointed and receive of it the hallowing wherewith Thou didst anoint kings and priests and prophets, so grant that it may give strength to all that taste of it and health to all that use it.<sup>30</sup>*

Another manual, *The Testament of Our Lord* of much later recension, preserves or elaborates important formularies chanted by the laity in the canon of the Mass. For example, after the bishop, it bids the laity say likewise:

*Remembering therefore Thy death and resurrection, we offer to Thee bread and the cup, giving thanks to Thee who alone art God for ever and our Saviour, since Thou hast promised to us to stand before Thee and to serve Thee in priesthood. Therefore we render thanks to Thee, we Thy servants, O Lord.*

At communion each lay recipient chants:

*Holy, Holy, Holy, Trinity ineffable, grant me to receive*

<sup>30</sup>*Op. cit.*, G. Dix, ed., v, 1 and 2.

*unto life this Body, and not unto condemnation. And grant me to bring forth the fruits that are pleasing to Thee . . . .*<sup>31</sup>

The degree of participation in the Syriac tradition represented by the *Testament* is extraordinary. But during the pontificate of Bishop Damasus (366-84), we learn, the Christian *populus* of Rome, fearing God rather than the emperor and their pontiff, "author of wickedness and a murderer," felt free to congregate in the cemeteries of the martyrs and celebrated "*stationes sine clericis*." Whether these "stations" were penitential or eucharistic gatherings is uncertain.<sup>32</sup> In the Graeco-Roman world it was ordinarily only among heretics that laics could, in the absence of the clergy, proceed to the enactment of the eucharist on their own. Tertullian, after he had become a Montanist, asks the question:

*Are not even we laics priests? It is written [Rev. 1:6]: "A kingdom also and priests to His God and Father, hath He made us." It is the authority of the Church and the honor through the sessions (consessus) of the ordo sanctified to God which has established the difference between the ordo and the plebs. Accordingly, where there is no session of the ecclesiastical ordo, thou offerest the eucharist, and baptizest (tingues) and art a sacerdos for thyself; for where three are, there is the church, albeit they be laics.*<sup>33</sup>

Besides the eucharistic liturgy there was the love-feast, sometimes accompanying it, sometimes observed separately in the homes of the more affluent members. The bishop would be invited to break the bread. Tertullian describes such an *agape* and, by good fortune, mentions the role of the laics:

<sup>31</sup>*Op. cit.*, i, 23; transl. James Cooper and Arthur Maclean (Edinburgh, 1902), 73; see another long formulary, 83f.

<sup>32</sup>See Christine Mohrmann, "*Satio*," *Vigiliae Christianae*, VII (1953), 224. At the same period in the East, Basil of Caesarea countenanced laymen, during persecution, in keeping the communion at home and partaking of it with their own hands at appropriate intervals. He cites the current usage of the laity in Egypt and the practice of hermits in the wilderness where there is no priest. *Ep.* xciii.

<sup>33</sup>*De exhort. cast.*, 7.



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*After washing of hands and the lighting of lamps members are invited to stand out and sing to the best of their ability either from sacred scriptures or something of their own composing; which gives a test of how much they have drunk.*<sup>34</sup>

He is here defending the assembly from pagan charges of license! He goes on to say that "the feast ends, as it began, with prayer."

We have already quoted Tertullian even while still orthodox on the lawfulness of the lay performance of baptism in the absence of a cleric. Long before him the oldest church manual of discipline, the *Didache*, assumed that any Christian, including a laic, might baptize provided he fasted, like the one to be christened, "for one or two days beforehand."<sup>35</sup> The fourth-century Ambrosiaster, looking back on the early days, says, "everyone baptized;"<sup>36</sup> and his contemporary Jerome remarked that, "if necessity so be, even laics may and frequently do baptize."<sup>37</sup> The Iberian council of Elvira (c. 306) in canon 38 makes rather specific the meaning of such necessity:

*During a sea voyage, or in general, if no church is near, a laic who has not soiled his baptismal robe and is not a digamist [twice-married as a result either of widowerhood or religiously prompted divorce from an unbelieving spouse], may baptize a catechumen who is at the point of death.*

It should be added for completeness that in the baptism and unction of female catechumens widows and deaconesses who were essentially *lay* persons had, from the beginning, taken an active part in helping the bishop or presbyter in all but the anointment of the head.

<sup>34</sup>*Apol.*, 39.

<sup>35</sup>*Op. cit.*, 7.

<sup>36</sup>*Comm. in Eph.* iv:11.

<sup>37</sup>*Dial. contra Lucifer.*, 9.

THE CONSTITUTIONAL ROLE OF THE LAITY<sup>38</sup>

The choosing in Acts 1:15 of a successor of Judas in the presence of precisely *one hundred and twenty* of the "multitude" (this same number requisite in a Jewish community in order to elect members to the Sanhedrin) and in Acts 6:5 the choosing of the deacons, also by the whole multitude, served as a pattern and apostolic sanction for the lay election of clerics throughout the ante-Nicene period. The *Didache*, after dealing with inspired prophets and teachers visiting as itinerants, goes on quite simply:

*Elect therefore for yourselves bishops and deacons of the Lord, men meek, and not lovers of money, and truthful, and approved; for they too minister to you the ministry of the prophets and teachers.*<sup>39</sup>

But elsewhere, and especially later, the procedure was not nearly so direct and simple. Distinctions came to be made between the divine vocation, the lay recognition of the call or election, the liturgical sacring, and the installation. Nevertheless, to the end of our period and well into the Constantinian age, the laity played an important part in the elevation of their bishop. Hippolytus in the *Apostolic Tradition* records the aforementioned refinements; but the bishop is still "elected by all the laity."<sup>40</sup>

Origen observes that the chief must be ordained "in the presence of the whole laity in order that all may know for certain that the man elected to the priesthood is of the whole people the most eminent . . . and . . . to avoid any subsequent change of mind or lingering doubt."<sup>41</sup>

<sup>38</sup>The most recent specialized study is that of P. Trempelas, "Hē summetochē tou laou en tēi eklogēi tōn episkopōn," *Epistēmōnikē Epelēris* of the Theological School of the University of Athens (1954-1955), 1-27. See also C. Jenkins, "The Position of Clergy and Laity in the Early Church in Relation to the Episcopate," *Episcopacy, Ancient and Modern*, Claude Jenkins, ed. (London, 1930).

<sup>39</sup>*Op. cit.*, 15.

<sup>40</sup>*Op. cit.*, ii, 1.

<sup>41</sup>In *Levit.*, *hom.* 3. The text survives only in Latin, and the key terms are *sacerdos* and *populus*.

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Cyprian makes a similar point: "The bishop should be chosen in the presence of the laity who have most fully known the life of each one of several possible choices, and have looked into the doings of each one as respects his habitual conduct."<sup>42</sup> Cyprian also insists that just as the laity has the power of recognition, they have also the power of withdrawing from the jurisdiction of an unworthy cleric:

*... the laity, obedient to the dominical precepts and fearing God, ought to separate themselves from a sinful prelate (praepositus) and not associate themselves with the sacrifices of a sacrilegious priest (sacerdos), especially since they themselves have the power either of choosing (eligere) worthy priests or of rejecting (recusare) unworthy ones.*<sup>43</sup>

So well known was the power of Christian laics to approve or disapprove their leaders that even the Emperor Alexander Severus (222-235), who was sufficiently well informed to know about their golden rule and who desired to erect a temple to Christ as one of the gods, adopted from the Christians the practice of posting the names of his nominees to public office for the sake of securing public testimony as to their character, saying "it was unjust that, when Christians and Jews observed this custom in announcing the names of those to be ordained," it would be "monstrous that such a precaution should be omitted in the case of provincial governors to whom were committed the lives and fortunes of men."<sup>44</sup>

### THE DISCIPLINE OF THE CHURCH

Admission to the communion of the saints was effected by baptism. Excommunication of the faithless and the wayward members, an originally unforeseen disciplinary action,

<sup>42</sup>*Ep.* lxvii, 5. In *Ep.* x, 8, he speaks of Cornelius of Rome as made bishop by the judgment of God and Christ, by the testimony of the clerics, and by the vote (*suffragio*) of both the priests and the *plebs*.

<sup>43</sup>*Ep.*, lxvii, 3.

<sup>44</sup>*Vita Alex.*, 45, 7.

developed its forms more slowly and therewith also still other constitutional procedures for the readmittance of the penitent. Paul commanded by letter (I Cor. 5) that the Corinthian church assembled, with his spirit present, excommunicate a particularly diseased member, consigning him to Satan. In Matthew 16 the prince of the apostles was expressly given the power of the keys, the power to bind and loose. Over against both this dominical authorization and the notable apostolic action, which would subsequently serve as a model for every bishop, was the "competing" authorization of communal action in Matthew 18:15-20, which undoubtedly transcribed the usage of the community at an early date and then served as another authoritative pattern for assembling the whole church for a final act of corporate excommunication of an unworthy member thrice warned. But eventually the apostolic-episcopal pattern came to prevail over that of communal action. Through the sacrament of penance the pastor (bishop or sacerdotal presbyter) assumed responsibility for the excommunication and readmission of the subordinate members of the church, lay and clerical, while the bishops corporately in council determined on the terms of excommunication and reinstatement of their episcopal colleagues.

But this process was completed only in the Constantinian age. In the first three centuries, the struggle over the authority respectively of the apostolic bishop, the college of presbyters, the confessors, and the laity, especially in the problem of dealing with members who had lapsed during persecution, was vigorously fought out. Ante-Nicene Church history is the story of innumerable small and large, regional, "national," and class schisms over the issue of rigorism and laxism. It is significant that in the numerous manuals of church law, which were commonly ascribed to the apostles but which, of course, reflected the usage and experience of the growing Church, the



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communal disciplinary session portrayed and authorized in Matthew 18 was gradually converted into the pattern for the lay acclamation of a bishop-elect who before the whole church was thrice declared to be faultless and hence worthy of the headship of the church.<sup>45</sup>

Although the clerical control of disciplinary action comes to prevail in the old Catholic Church, as distinguished from the rigoristic schisms and some of the heretical sects, we must sample the evidence of the strong persistence of the communal voice in the disciplinary action of the ante-Nicene Church.

Clement of Rome, who (c. 95 A.D.) deplores the constitutional revolution in Corinth, does not so much contest the right of the laity to eject their liturgical leaders as chastize them for having presumed to do so when their leaders had in fact "offered the sacrifices *with innocence and holiness*."<sup>46</sup> Although this is more of a constitutional than a disciplinary matter, we have in another Apostolic Father, Polycarp of Smyrna, a clear indication that the whole church and more specifically the laity with their presbyters have the right to depose and excommunicate one of their presbyters, Valens by name and his wife, who had fallen into error apparently in connection with defalcation of the communal funds. Polycarp urges the whole church to restore the couple if theirs proves to be a "true repentance."<sup>47</sup>

<sup>45</sup>Cf., for example, the wording of the electoral procedure in the *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles*, viii, 4. There is a clear echo of the participation of laics (*tēs synodou kai tou plēthous*) in disciplinary action in Chrysostom, *Hom. in Act.*, XXXVII. As late as the middle of the ninth century in the Syriac tradition I find that the corporate disciplinary action of the Church is remembered and perhaps practiced. Bishop Ishōdad of Merv (c. 850) in his commentary on Matthew declares: "By means of the person of Simon He promised [the keys] also to all congregations of believers, those that share in His confession; for His power is one with that of all priests and orthodox persons."—Margaret Gibson, ed., *Horae Semiticae*, No. V, Vol. I (Cambridge, 1911), 66. On the episcopal monopolization of the prerogative of all spiritual men to judge all things (I Cor. 2:15), see Albert Koeniger, ed., "Prima sedes a nemine judicatur," *Festgabe Albert Ehrhard* (Bonn, 1922), 273-300.

<sup>46</sup>*Op. cit.*, 44.

<sup>47</sup>*Op. cit.*, 11.

For North Africa we have evidence that primitive usage persisted vigorously and even developed new constitutional forms of lay authority in the realms of discipline and temporal administration. North African writers from Tertullian to Augustine mention besides the *presbyteri* (*seniores ecclesiastici*) an apparently collegiate group of *seniores laici*.<sup>48</sup> They may have been elected by the whole body of the faithful,<sup>49</sup> but were, more likely, simply the most respected of the laity, having, one might add, sufficient leisure and sufficient means to serve with the bishop. There seems also to have been a distinction felt among the lay *seniores* between the weightier elders *ex plebe* or *locorum seu urbium* (who are listed after the clerical presbyters and before the deacons), and the elders of the church (*seniores ecclesiae*, who are listed after the deacons). The latter may have been limited to the caretaking tasks of fabric and furniture, but the *seniores* "from the laity," possibly nominated by and surely responsible to them, clearly had important administrative and judicial functions. In his *Apology*, Tertullian says that "*probat* *seniores* who have received the honor not by payment but by public testimony preside" at the church sessions, which he likens to a *curia*.<sup>50</sup> But this lawyer-theologian may, at this point, be adapting his speech to the pagan audience; he has preferred the general term *seniores* to the more esoteric (clerical) *presbyteri*.<sup>51</sup>

Tertullian vividly describes the humiliating public confession of grievous sin and points up for us the individual and collective action of the bishop, the presbyters (here there is no mention of lay elders as a distinct group), and the faithful laity:

*Exomologesis is a discipline consisting in prostration and humiliation, imposing on the offender such a demeanor as*

<sup>48</sup>See most recently Pier G. Caron, "Les *seniores laici* de l'Église africaine," *Revue internationale des Droits de l'Antiquité*, VI (1951), 77, 2; also his basic study, *I Poteri giuridici del laicato nella Chiesa primitiva* (Milan, 1948).

<sup>49</sup>So, Caron on the basis of an epitaph, but one would need more evidence.

<sup>50</sup>*Op. cit.*, 39.

<sup>51</sup>Caron holds that they are *seniores ex plebe*.

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*to attract mercy . . . to exchange his sins for harsh treatment of himself; . . . in general, to nourish prayers with fasting, to groan, to weep and moan day and night to the Lord his God, to prostrate himself before the presbyters (presbyteri), and to kneel before God's dear ones [cari, possibly the confessors]; to invoke all the brethren (fratres) as sponsors of his prayer for mercy.*<sup>52</sup>

Cyprian makes even more specific the rigoristic and perhaps even vindictive motivation of the laity in testing the penitent and also his own episcopal role in the readmission of schismatics, writing to the bishop of Rome, Cornelius:

*Oh, if you could, dearest brother, be with us here when those evil and perverse men return from schism, you would see what effort is mine to persuade patience to our brethren that they should calm their grief of mind and consent to receive and heal the wicked. At the return of the submissive they are filled with joy, but great is the outcry at the reception of the incorrigible . . . . Scarcely do I persuade the laity; nay, I extort it from them that they should suffer such to be admitted. And the just indignation of the brotherhood is vindicated perhaps in the fact that one or another who, notwithstanding the opposition and gainsaying of the laity, having been admitted through my indulgence (facultas), have proved worse than they were before . . . .*<sup>53</sup>

Many times the penitent schismatics and the lapsed, held back from readmission by the laity more severe than their bishop, sought out the prayers and specifically the certificates sometimes granted by confessors who, having themselves been more than meritorious during persecutions, exercised a moral authority in the community or, in some cases, arrogated to

<sup>52</sup>*De poenit.*, 7.

<sup>53</sup>*Ep.* lix (liv), 15.

themselves the privilege of forgiving less steadfast fellow Christians. In Cyprian's time they constituted a threat to the more orderly procedures of the church in session. Confessors were, of course, a class that transcended the distinction between clerics and laics; but laics, being in any event more numerous than clerics, naturally predominated among the confessors. Tertullian, with characteristic irony, excoriates the grievous sinners: "most eager to gain access to the prison who have lost the right of entrance to the church."<sup>54</sup>

After the age of the persecutions it was the laity or the faithful as a whole, and not the clergy, who usually determined the valid confessors and martyrs and who led in elaborating in the fourth century the cultus of the saintly martyrs.<sup>55</sup>

Cyprian's contemporary in Rome, Cornelius, gives us a picture similar to that of North Africa as to the role of the laity in the disciplinary action of the church. Certain named confessors who had defected with Novatus returned.

*... they made known in the presence both of a number of bishops [not just the bishop of Rome, perhaps not including], and also of very many presbyters and lay men, bewailing and repenting of the fact that for a brief space they had left the church under the persuasion of this treacherous and malicious wild beast.*<sup>56</sup>

One of the three simple and rural bishops whom Novatus had brought in to ordain him repented. With him Cornelius thereupon had communion, however, "as a laic, all the laity present interceding for him." At an earlier date, under bishop Zephyrinus, Natalius, another confessor, was lured into being ordained a heretical bishop, attracted by a salary of 150 *denarii* a month. Visited by Christ in visions, he finally desired to return to the orthodox community:

<sup>54</sup>*Ad martyres*, 1.

<sup>55</sup>On the communal voice in the canonization of the saints, see E. E. Kemp, *Canonization in the Western Church* (Oxford, 1948), ch. i. Eventually, of course, canonization, from being a popular and then an episcopal prerogative, fell, in the West, within the sole authority of the bishop of Rome.

<sup>56</sup>Cornelius *apud* Eusebius, *H.E.*, vi, 43, 6.



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... he arose at dawn, put on sackcloth, covered himself with ashes, and with all haste prostrated himself in tears before Zephyrinus the bishop; and, rolling at the feet not only of those in the clergy but also of the laics, he moved with his tears the compassionate church of the merciful Christ.<sup>57</sup>

### THE ELEEMOSYNARY ROLE OF THE LAITY

Luke describes in Acts (2:44; 4:32ff.) the communism of the saints in Jerusalem as though to tell the Gentile world that its dream of the return of the golden age had in a sense been realized in the Church, as likewise the prophecies of the Old Testament had been fulfilled in this partial restoration of the goodness of paradise. The communism of the Dead Sea Essenes has recently provided us with fresh analogues and antecedents. The communistic motif after the first generation, though it was largely turned in the direction of monasticism, now needs fresh investigation, for the late credal addendum on the *communio sanctorum* may well have in its ultimate background not only the communion of the departed saints but the community of things made holy in the fellowship of the liturgy.<sup>58</sup> The liturgical offerings of olives, cheese, and oil, mentioned previously in the *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus, had as their destination beyond the altar the poor and the needy of the parish. Pseudo-Clement, who incorporates a good many Pythagorean and Stoic ideas about the golden age and communism,<sup>59</sup> declares in his letter written to James as bishop of Jerusalem that, "as it is wicked for you to undertake secular cares . . . so it is sin for every laic if they do not stand by one

<sup>57</sup>The anonymous author of the *Little Labyrinth*, Eusebius, *H.E.*, v, 28, 8-12.

<sup>58</sup>Barely suggested by F. J. Badcock, *The History of the Creeds* (London, 1930), ch. xviii. See further the chapter on the Ebionites in K. Stendahl, ed., *op. cit.*, ch. xiii. We need more monographs like that of Arthur O. Lovejoy, "The Communism of St. Ambrose," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, III (1942), 458-468; G. Sodeur, *Der Kommunismus in der Kirchengeschichte* (1920); and F. Meffert, *Der Kommunismus Jesu und der Kirchenväter* (1922). I have touched on the subject incidentally in "The Golden Priesthood and the Leaden State," *Harvard Theological Review*, XLIX (1956), No. 4, esp. 45ff.

<sup>59</sup>See Hans von Schubert, *Der Kommunismus der Wiedertäufer und seine Quellen*, Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, S. B. philo-hist. Kl., X:11 (1919).

another even in their daily needs (*biōtikais chreiais*)."<sup>60</sup> The Ebionites retained longest the ideal of the community of goods, but, at last, it became a way of life for monks only.

Tertullian describes the common chest of a later date and in another tradition and the voluntary character of the offering:

*Though we have a kind of money-chest, it is not for the collection of official fees, as if ours were a religion of fixed prices. Each of us puts in a small donation on the appointed day in each month, or when he chooses, and only if he chooses, and only if he can; for no one is compelled and the offering is voluntary. This is as it were the deposit fund of kindness. For we do not pay out money from this fund to spend on feasts or drinking parties or inelegant sprees, but to pay for the nourishment and burial of the poor, to support boys and girls who are orphan or destitute; and old people who are confined to the house; and those who have been shipwrecked; and any who are in the mines, or banished to islands, or in prison, or are pensioners because of their confession, provided they are suffering because they belong to the followers of God.*<sup>61</sup>

The idea of bequests, a quota for the poor and for the benefit of the soul of a departed member, is first clearly traceable in the fourth century;<sup>62</sup> but the *Testament of our Lord*, which though later, preserves older usage, has instructions on bequests to the church, representing no doubt the survival of a more primitive view that such gifts should be made during the believer's lifetime:

*If any one depart from the world, either a faithful man or a faithful woman, having children, let them give their possessions to the Church, so that the Church may provide*

<sup>60</sup>*Hom., ep. Cl.*, Paul de Lagarde, ed., *Clementina* (Leipzig, 1865).

<sup>61</sup>*Apolog.*, 39.

<sup>62</sup>See Eberhard Bruck, *Kirchenväter und soziales Erbrecht* (Berlin/Göttingen/Heidelberg, 1956).

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*for their children, and that from the things which they have the poor may be given rest, that God may give mercy to their children and rest to those who have left them behind. But if a man have no children, let him have not much possessions, but let him give much of his possessions to the poor and to the prisoners, and only keep what is right and sufficient for himself.*<sup>63</sup>

Irenaeus, without the trace of calculating charity in Tertullian and the Syriac Testament, movingly describes the philanthropic outreach of Christian worship and the Christian's giving of his talent to the whole world:

*Wherefore, also, those who are in truth His disciples, receiving grace from Him, do in His name perform [miracles], so as to promote the welfare of other men, according to the gift which each one has received from Him. For some do certainly and truly drive out devils, so that those who have thus been cleansed from evil spirits frequently both believe [in Christ], and join themselves to the Church. Others have foreknowledge of things to come. They see visions and utter prophetic expressions. Others still, heal the sick by laying their hands upon them, and they are made whole . . . . And what shall I more say? It is not possible to name the number of the gifts which the Church, [scattered] throughout the whole world, has received from God . . . and which she exerts day by day for the benefit of the Gentiles, neither practising deception upon them, nor taking any reward from them. For as she has received freely from God, freely also does she minister [to others].*<sup>64</sup>

Justin Martyr among many others refers to the converting example of Christian lives.<sup>65</sup> Dionysius of Alexandria describes the nursing and burying of those felled by the plague and contrasts the action of the "presbyters, deacons, and many

<sup>63</sup>*Op. cit.*, ii, 5.

<sup>64</sup>*Adv. haer.* ii, 32, 4. Very similar is Aristides, *Apol.*, xv (Syriac version).

<sup>65</sup>*Apol.* I, 16.

of the *laity* transferring death to themselves" to succor others, with the ignoble behavior of the pagans, who left even their closest loved ones in selfish haste.<sup>66</sup>

From this tribute to lay workers in time of plague we may turn to the quite specialized religio-medical practice of exorcism in the Ancient Church and the role of the laity therein. Exorcism and the renunciation of the devil and all his works was an integral part of the baptismal rite and the bishop pronounced the formulas. But besides this solemn, sacramental exorcism, there was the kindred therapeutic exorcism carried on by charismatic and commonly lay practitioners. The healing ministry of prayer to Christ to drive out the devils of insanity and sickness on the apostolic pattern is briefly referred to by Origen who says, "it is mostly people quite untrained who do this work."

*Not a few Christians exorcise sufferers, and that without manipulations and magic or the use of drugs, but just by prayer and an invocation of the simpler kind and by such means as the simpler kind of man might be able to use.*<sup>67</sup>

Effective cures were among the most convincing credentials of Christians seeking to convert their pagan neighbors. To the role of the laity in the communication of the Gospel by example and precept we now turn.

THE COMPETENCE OF THE LAITY  
IN THE FORMULATION OF DOCTRINE,  
IN TEACHING AND IN  
MISSIONARY CONVERSION

As we turn from good works and the exercise of discipline to the communication of the tradition by missionary evangelism, instruction, catechizing, and the definition of doctrine in synod, we find that here too, after a period of rather full participation with the ordained clergy, the role of the laity declines, until it is virtually extinguished by the opening of

<sup>66</sup>Letter to the brethren, c. 252, *apud* Eusebius, *H.E.*, vii, 22, 7f.

<sup>67</sup>*Contra Celsum*, vii, 4.



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the era of the great councils, except insofar as Arianizing lay philosophers have their influence on one side of the great debate (undoubtedly to the further detriment of the reputation of the laity for competence in dogmatic formulation) and again insofar as the royal-priestly emperors do indeed represent the laity in the definition of the faith.<sup>68</sup>

Originally, "everyone taught" the redeeming faith that was his, says Ambrosiaster, looking back into the ante-Nicene period before the bishops as successors of the apostles came alone to exercise the magisterial function in the church.<sup>69</sup> To the compiler of the *Didache*, for example, the divinely called prophet and teacher (neither lay nor clerical in terms of a later nomenclature but "charismatic") is clearly to be supported by the laity (and lacking such itinerants the laity is to elect bishops as "teachers" in their stead).<sup>70</sup> *The Apostolic Constitutions* of a much later date reflects the coming to a close of the tradition of the charismatic teacher when it grudgingly orders that, "even if a teacher is a laic, still if he be skilled in the word and reverent in habit, let him teach . . . ." <sup>71</sup> In between the *Didache* and the *Constitutions* we may place the transitional emergence of the teaching order as the *choros* intermediate between the clergy and the laity. Justin Martyr and Origen were notable members of the "choir of teachers."<sup>72</sup>

Yet Origen, the greatest theologian of his time, was rebuked by his bishop in Alexandria for preaching and teaching, on invitation, in the presence of bishops. His bishop, Demetrius, also rebuked the responsible bishops (of Jerusalem and Caesarea) for permitting a laic to sit in the episcopal *cathedra* and

<sup>68</sup>On the authority of the emperors see Francis Dvornik, "Emperors, Popes, and General Councils," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, VI (Cambridge, 1951), 1-23. Two ancient historians mention laics skilled in dialectic participating in the Council of Nicaea in 325: Socrates, *H.E.*, i, 8; Sozomen, *H.E.*, i, 17.

<sup>69</sup>*Com. in Eph.*, 4:11.

<sup>70</sup>*Op. cit.*, 13.

<sup>71</sup>*Op. cit.*, viii, 31.

<sup>72</sup>I have brought together some of this material in *Ministry in Historical Perspectives*, 46-48. See Hans Freiherr von Campenhausen, *Kirchliches Amt und Geistliche Vollmacht* (Tübingen, 1953), ch. viii.

preach. Their self-defense is preserved by Eusebius in a document suggesting that such usage, despite their own magnanimity, was indeed on the way out. They report that Demetrius added, in his letter to them:

*that such a thing had never been heard of, nor taken place hitherto, that laics should preach (homilein) in the presence of bishops; though I [Alexander or Theocritus] do not know how he comes to say what is evidently not true. For instance, where there are found persons suited to help the brethren, they also are invited to preach to the people by the holy bishops, as, for example, in Laranda Euelpis by Neon, and in Iconium Paulinus by Celsus, and in Synnada Theodore by Atticus, our blessed brother bishops. And it is likely that this thing happens in other places also without our knowing it.<sup>73</sup>*

More significant for our present purpose than the feats of such learned laics as Origen and the lay succession of brilliant heads of the catechetical school in Alexandria of which he was one, was the role of the unnamed and less tutored laity who seemed to have participated rather actively, not only in the disciplinary sessions of the church, but also in the synods convened for the clarification of the faith and practice received. Our most interesting and conclusive material happens to center in actions connected with Origen and more generally with Egypt.

In the newly discovered, stenographically recorded papyrus on the debate of Origen with Heraclides<sup>74</sup> we have first-hand evidence of the modest but essential part played by the

<sup>73</sup>Eusebius, *H.E.*, vi, 19, 18. Adolf Harnack notes how far-fetched the examples are and calls these men the last preaching teachers known by name besides Origen. For other pertinent material see his *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries* (English translation), 2 vols. (New York, 1908).

<sup>74</sup>Jean Scherer, ed., *Entretien d'Origène avec Héraclide et les évêques sur le Père, le Fils, et l'âme*, Publications de la Société Fouad et de Papyrologie, Textes et Documents, IX (Cairo, 1949); translated in the *Library of Christian Classics*, II (Philadelphia, 1954).

simple laity in doctrinal formulation; for we can literally overhear the great (essentially lay) theologian himself solemnly asseverate in an Arabian synod (called to deal with problems of the Trinity and the final resurrection): "Accordingly, with the permission of God and secondly of the bishops [there were several in the debate with him], and thirdly of the presbyters and of the *laity*, I say again what I think on the subject." Then after summarizing his position he again takes cognizance of the laity: "If you agree to these statements, they also with the solemn testimony of the *laity* shall be made legally binding and established."<sup>75</sup> It appears that at the end of the synod the doctrinal formulations were formally set forth, the whole assembly including the laity ratifying them. Moreover the laity probably had a good deal to do with initiating the original petitions which occasioned the synod.<sup>76</sup>

The doctrinal competence of the laity in the sense of their feeling responsible for an explicit faith and of having the right to demand clarification on disputed points of tradition and scripture comes out vividly again in a letter of Bishop Dionysius of Alexandria preserved by Eusebius. A certain Nepos, on the basis of the book of Revelation, had been teaching a rather fleshly millennium. The Church's view of the Kingdom and the place of Revelation in the still incompletely clarified canon of New Testament scriptures was thus at stake—scarcely *adiaphora*! The bishop tells how he went out to the center of the affected region, Arsinoe, to discuss the whole problem reasonably and with charity:

*Now when I came [c. 254] to the [nome] of Arsinoe, where, as thou knowest, this doctrine of Nepos had long been prevalent, so that schisms and defections of whole churches had taken place, I called together the presbyters*

<sup>75</sup>Scherer, *op. cit.*, 128 and 134.

<sup>76</sup>In two other synods at which Origen dealt with doctrinal matters the laity are known to have been present, surely in more than the role of auditors or spectators for otherwise their presence would not have been noticed in such brief accounts. Eusebius, *H.E.*, vi, 37; Carl Lommatzsch, ed., *Opera omnia*, XVII, 9. "A great majority of the laity" were also present in the important synod of eighty-three bishops in Carthage of September 1, 256; *apud* Cypr.

*and [lay] teachers of the brethren in the village—there were present also such of the brethren as wished; and I urged them to hold the examination of the question publicly.*

Then follows a description of a friendly give-and-take. Dionysius expresses:

*greatest admiration for . . . their firmness, love of truth, facility in following an argument, and intelligence, as we propounded in order and with forbearance the questions, the difficulties raised and the points of agreement, on the one hand [their] refusing to cling obstinately and at all costs (even though they were manifestly wrong) to opinions once held; and on the other hand [their] not shirking the counter-arguments, but as far as possible attempting to grapple with the questions in hand and master them."*<sup>77</sup>

Dionysius goes on to admit he could not always understand the Apocalypse and acknowledges further that, "if convinced by reason" on the part of these nimble-witted and earnest presbyters, lay teachers, and simple laics, he was not "ashamed to change our [episcopal] opinions and give our assent . . ."

Besides their teaching in catechetical classes and their limited but significant doctrinal competence in synod, the laity were also engaged in the direct communication of the gospel, each believer on his own, and not infrequently in the course of his or her martyrdom.

One Papyrus, presumably a lay member of the church in Pergamon, during the persecution under Marcus Aurelius proudly addressed the interrogating proconsul who had asked whether he had any children: "In every district and city I have children in God . . . yes, and many of them, thanks be to God!"<sup>78</sup> The Phrygian physician Alexander, renowned in Gaul for his love toward God and his boldness of speech, "for he was not without a share of the *apostolic* gift," encouraged the confessors and then was himself seized and taken with

<sup>77</sup>*Apud* Eusebius, *H.E.*, vii, 24, 6.

<sup>78</sup>E. C. E. Owen, *Some Authentic Acts of the Early Martyrs* (Oxford, 1927), 42f.



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them into the amphitheater.<sup>79</sup> The martyred centurion Marcellus (d. 298), in court martial under the Prefect of the Praetorian Guard, by his Christian "soldierly" example in responding to the enraged examiner converted the court stenographer, Cassian, who threw down his notebook in disgust and followed the Christian way.<sup>80</sup>

Of the missionary teachers, most of them in his day laics rather than clerics, Origen has the following description:

*... as far as they are able Christians leave no stone unturned to spread the faith in all parts of the world. Some, in fact, have done the work of going round not only cities but even villages and country cottages to make others also pious towards God. One could not say that they did this for the sake of wealth, since sometimes they do not even accept money for the necessities of life, and if ever they are compelled to do so by want in this respect, they are content with what is necessary and no more, even if several people are willing to share with them and to give them more than they need.*<sup>81</sup>

But a more eloquent observer is Celsus, the philosophical foe of Christianity, to the refutation of whose charges Origen devoted a major work. We may properly close our account of the role of the laity in the period of the persecutions with the former's disdainful caricature of the little people (men, women,<sup>82</sup> and children) ever ready for a martyr's death, who carried the Gospel into the recesses of society and who, though nameless and despised by such cultured and informed observers as pagan Celsus, probably did more even than bishops, apologists, and theologians to prepare for the sudden conquest of the Graeco-Roman world in the fourth century:

<sup>79</sup>Eusebius, *H.E.*, v, 1, 49.

<sup>80</sup>Owen, *op. cit.*, 121.

<sup>81</sup>*Contra Cel.* iii, 9. We know that an earlier head of the catechetical school of Alexandria, the lay teacher Pantaenus, was said to have been sent as a missionary to India. Eusebius, *H.E.*, v, 10.

<sup>82</sup>J. Foster, *op. cit.*, has underscored the prominence of women among the laity in the quiet propagation of the Gospel. He quotes effectively among others, Paul, Tertullian, the *Apostolic Constitutions*, Julian the Apostate, and Libanius.

*In private houses also [Celsus writes] we see wool-workers, cobblers, laundry-workers, and the most illiterate and bucolic yokels, who would not dare to say anything at all in front of their elders and more intelligent masters. But when they get hold of children in private and some little old women with them, they let out some astounding statements as, for example, that they must not pay any attention to their father and school-teachers, but must obey them; they say that these talk nonsense and have no understanding, and that in reality they neither know nor are able to do anything good, but are taken up with mere empty chatter. But they alone, they say, know the right way to live, and if the children would believe them, they would become happy and make their home happy as well.<sup>82</sup>*

Disparagingly, a philosophical publicist here describes better than he knew how in fact it was the little people, the lay men and women of the ante-Nicene Church, who built the foundations of that spiritual mansion (we need not insist on the happy home) in which even an emperor, a very practical layman, was one day to choose to live.

<sup>82</sup>Quoted by Origen, *Contra Cel.* iii, 55.

# A BYZANTINE BOWL IN SERPENTINE

MARVIN C. ROSS

**I**N THE TREASURE OF SAINT MARK's in Venice is an oval bowl in serpentine, which has been mentioned in print a number of times. However, it has never been illustrated in full detail in any publication, since the interior has not been shown. During a visit to Venice in the Summer of 1957, the authorities of Saint Mark's kindly gave me permission to handle the bowl and examine it minutely. Further and more important, they allowed the removal of the Venetian Gothic mounting in order that the interior, which cradles an exquisite carving, could be photographed. Because of the remarkable technique of the carving on the outside and inside of the bowl and the fact that it dates from the Middle Byzantine period, I present the photographs here for the benefit of all who are interested in Byzantine art.

The bowl is lobate, a form long familiar in Byzantine art. Another example may be seen in the VI Century mosaic of the Adoration of the Magi in Ravenna. Of special interest,



PLATE 1 — VENICE. SAINT MARK'S. BOWL IN SERPENTINE



aside from the elegant lines of the bowl in Venice, is the relief carving in the center of the concavity—the standing figure of St. Demetrius, shown in the act of drawing his sword. He is identified by the inscription in Greek engraved on two of the petal-like division of the basin. As Professor André Grabar has pointed out, only at the church in Saloniki did the custom of making cult objects survive into the Middle Ages.<sup>1</sup> Throughout the Middle East it had been characteristic of churches and shrines erected in honor of martyrs, during the early ages of Christianity, and before the Arab Conquest in the VII Century. Some of the small cult objects made and sold at the Monastery of Saint Simeon Stylites in Syria, for example, and those from famous shrines throughout the Holy Land and elsewhere, still in many instances remain the only clues we can follow to reach a conception of the original, now long lost, decorations of churches in the Middle East.

The cult objects of Saint Demetrius have been used to form an idea of his shrine as it originally appeared in his church at Saloniki. This is particularly true of two gold enameled pendants, one in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and one in the British Museum, but also of a large number of small representations of the Saint Demetrius, some in silver, others in ivory, cameos, glass paste, *et cetera*. While not known to have been copied from any particular one of his shrines, many of these give every indication of having originated at Saloniki. From the designs and workmanship we can draw signally clear conclusions about the art of the second most important Byzantine city of the middle period. The glass pastes are many, scattered in monasteries and museums, all the way from Cyprus to America. They are so similar in design and conception that one can assume they were made originally at some shrine of the saint, most probably in Saloniki.

Saint Demetrius was known and loved by the Salonikans as the saint of protection, which accounts, of course, for his being represented with a drawn sword. The carving in the

<sup>1</sup>"Quelques reliquaires de Saint D  m  trius et le martyrium du saint    Saloniki," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, V, 3-26.



PLATE 2 — VENICE, SAINT MARK'S, BOWL IN SERPENTINE, INTERIOR

## *A Byzantine Bowl in Serpentine*

Saint Mark's bowl shows him in the act of drawing his sword, and this is unusual. I recall only one other instance in which he is seen actually drawing the sword, and that is in a relief on the facade of Saint Mark's in Venice, attributed by Otto Demus to the XII or XIII Centuries — before 1260, since it was in place by that time.<sup>2</sup> The question of whether it was made in Constantinople or Saloniki he leaves open, but he states it to be definitely of Greek workmanship and not Venetian in origin. It differs from many sculptures in Venice done by Venetians in the Byzantine style. Correspondingly, the origin of the lobate bowl in serpentine is an open question. However, it is also of Greek workmanship and not Venetian. There is no similarity stylistically to any Venetian carvings. Within the Byzantine Empire, Saloniki would seem the most likely place of origin. It was the heart of the Saint Demetrius cult. It has been demonstrated that many likenesses of him were made for the devoted there. Also, the high detail of the hair arrangement is to be seen in some of the earliest mosaics, still existing in the Saint Demetrius Church in Saloniki. Naturally, an artist would seize upon the opportunity to copy a personal detail so familiar to everyone in that locality. This is a small detail, but it adds to my conviction that one may suggest Saloniki as a place of origin for the bowl.

We have few dated Byzantine glyptics. Comparative material is, therefore, difficult to find for dating. No corpus of glyptics has been made as for ivory carvings. The only object that occurs to me—the one most nearly comparable—is the illustration of a jasper cameo in the Catalogue of the de Gruneisen Collection where a device of cross-hatching presents the figure as it does the armour of Saint Demetrius on our bowl.<sup>3</sup> The cameo is inscribed with the name Alexis Ducas, who, it has been suggested, was the Alexis V. Ducas who reigned briefly in 1204. A date in the late XII or early XIII Century would fit perfectly the style of the carved figure of Saint Demetrius in

<sup>2</sup>"Die Reliefikonen den Westfassade von San Marco" *Jbb. "Osterreichischen Byzantinischen Gesellschaft, III* (1954), 87-107.

<sup>3</sup>Paris, 1930, no. 434, pl. XXVI.

the serpentine bowl, a period also indicated for the stone relief on the facade of Saint Mark's, where the saint is shown again in the act of drawing his sword. The date is of special interest because both representations of the saint were made at about the same time. Bowls like the serpentine one dating from the XII-XIII Centuries are rare. It is of great beauty and elegance, affirming that the art of hardstone carving survived late in the Byzantine Empire.

The original purpose of the bowl is not recorded. It is unlikely that it was ever put to secular use. The Venetians gave it an ornate silver mounting during the Gothic period and it then served as a vessel to hold incense before it was put in the thurible to burn. Possibly the Venetians thought that it was first of all made for this purpose and reverently continued it in that service.

Saint Demetrius, the saint of protection, was invoked also for healing. It is not impossible that the artist associated with the belief in the curative power of incense another idea—that of the condition of the bodies of saints after death. "For as is well known, a fragrance . . . is one of the criteria of sanctity defunct"—an idea which in the very early Christian era was credited, as in later times. Perhaps the artist combined these two concepts of faith and created the figure of Saint Demetrius to suggest reassurance and comfort to those in peril. In medieval pictures showing the altar, as in the Monastery of Studenitsa, and in an embroidered Epitaphios Sidon at Ochrida, a small figure of Christ lies in the paten, intended, of course, to suggest the whole mystery of the Eucharist. In the same way, it is not altogether unlikely that the figure of Saint Demetrius in the serpentine bowl was meant to call to mind the efficacy of his protection and power to heal, the sweet odor of sanctity combining with that of the incense, a concept that would have suited the mentality of the devout in that particular period.



# THEMISTIUS' FIRST ORATION

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THE FULL SIGNIFICANCE of the career of Themistius for the history of the fourth century after Christ, and for the development of ancient political theory, is not yet a matter of common knowledge among scholars, in part because the most modern edition of his orations, that of Wilhelm Dindorf, was published as long ago as 1832 and has now become extremely rare.<sup>1</sup> The handsome edition published by the Jesuit scholar Harduin at Paris in 1684 is in fact easier to obtain today.<sup>2</sup> It is hoped that the lack of an easily accessible text may soon be remedied, since the present writer is preparing a new edition of the text, with English translation and commentary; this edition will embody the studies of the text by the Austrian scholar Heinrich Schenkl, which were left incomplete at his early death

<sup>1</sup>*Themistii Orationes ex codice Mediolanensi emendatae a G. Dindorf* (Leipzig, 1832). It was thanks to the generosity of Harold North Fowler that I was able to obtain a copy of this text.

<sup>2</sup>*Themistii Orationes XXXIII . . .* (Parisiis, In typographia regia, 1684).

some years ago. We can also look forward to a detailed study of Themistius' political ideas which will form a part of the comprehensive study of ancient political theory now being prepared by Professor F. Dvornik of Dumbarton Oaks.

In the meantime, it may be useful to publish a translation of Themistius' first, and very characteristic oration, "On Love of Mankind; or, Constantius" (Περὶ φιλανθρωπίας ἢ Κωνσταντίνου), which is in many ways the most characteristic of his political discourses.

When the oration was delivered before the Emperor Constantius, probably in A.D. 350, Themistius was about 33 years old, and had been conducting a school in Constantinople for about five years, having come to the new capital in A.D. 337, when he was about 20 years old.<sup>3</sup> Themistius must have realized the supreme importance, for himself, of his initial appearance before the emperor, and he must have selected his theme, and considered his treatment of it, with care. As a pagan man of letters aspiring to the favor of a Christian emperor who ruled an incompletely converted empire, Themistius was in a delicate though not isolated position; not the least reason for the exercise of tact would have been the presence in the emperor's court of both pagans and Christians. Many (though not all) of the political ideas which Themistius developed in orations delivered later in his career (his last discourses were delivered to Theodosius I) appear in this oration to Constantius.

In modern times Themistius' views have been discussed in various aspects by several scholars, including V. Valdenberg,<sup>4</sup> E. H. Kantorowicz,<sup>5</sup> and the present writer.<sup>6</sup> Character-

<sup>3</sup>On Themistius' life and works, see W. Stegemann, "Themistios," Pauly-Wissowa-Kroll, *Realencyclopädie*, 5A, cols. 1642-1680.

<sup>4</sup>V. Valdenberg, "Discours politiques de Thémistius dans leur rapport avec l'antiquité," *Byzantion* 1 (1924), 557-580.

<sup>5</sup>E. H. Kantorowicz, "Kaiser Friedrich II. und das Königsbild des Hellenismus," *Varia Variorum: Festgabe für Karl Reinhardt* (Münster, 1952), 171; "On Transformations of Apolline Ethics," *Charites: Festschrift Ernst Langlotz* (Bonn, 1957), 267, 270-271.

<sup>6</sup>G. Downey, "Philanthropia in Religion and Statecraft in the Fourth Century after Christ," *Historia*, 4 (1955), 199-208; "Education and Public Problems

istic extracts from his fifth oration, addressed to the Emperor Jovian (A.D. 363-364), have also been presented by Sir Ernest Barker in his collection of political texts of the period from Constantine the Great to the end of the fourth century.<sup>7</sup> Pending the appearance of the new edition, the present translation may serve to introduce wider circles to his work.

The text followed is that printed by Dindorf, and the numbers of the pages in Dindorf's edition are given within square brackets. Words or phrases added by the translator to make the meaning clearer are enclosed within square brackets.

## *Themistius, Oration 1.*

### ON LOVE OF MANKIND; OR, CONSTANTIUS.

[1] Now for the first time there comes to you, O Emperor, a discourse which is free and sincere in its praise, and cannot of its own accord offer even the smallest statement that it cannot justify in the eyes of philosophy. Wherefore it is needful for it to praise only the things which we admire. In you, it admires one good quality, namely that of your soul, more than all your possessions together. Most admirers see rather, and sing in their discourses, things such as the expanse of the realm, the number of subjects, the invincible regiments of infantry and the troops of cavalry and the abundance of their equipment and the enormous screens of weapons and the dragons on the delicate banners, raised on high on gilded shafts, filled and shaken by the breeze. The more elegant of those speakers come a little nearer to yourself and lay hold of your crown and your

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as Seen by Themistius," *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, 86 (1955), 291-307; "Education in the Christian Roman Empire: Christian and Pagan Theories under Constantine and his Successors," *Speculum*, 32 (1957), 56-61; "Themistius and the Defense of Hellenism in the Fourth Century," *Harvard Theological Review*, 50 (1957), 259-274.

<sup>7</sup>E. Barker, *From Alexander to Constantine* (Oxford, 1956), 377-380. The chronological limits of the book indicated in the title are not wholly accurate, since Synesius and Themistius are included.

robe and your strong girdle and the gleaming colors of your tunic. Some, again, think that they come into even closer touch with you when they describe your armed dances and the light leavings in full armor and curvettings on horses, [2] and they very properly praise the body which is thus prepared, in the third generation of imperial blood,<sup>1</sup> for the labors it will have to endure.

But these men perhaps do not know that every emperor is able to do only a little, with his hands and with his whole body, toward the preservation of his realm, in comparison with what he can accomplish by the power of his intellect; and the man who is able to perceive that power of intellect is the man who is able to comprehend the true emperor and to admire yourself, not your possessions. The men of whom I spoke experience what they deserve. There is simply something about the soul which makes it more difficult to show itself than the body, and while the eyes of most men see the latter at once, they are incapable of perceiving the former. The things that surround an emperor outwardly, being variegated and pleasing to the eye, cheat the sight of the things that dwell within, just as, I am sure, the outer gates of some holy shrine, ornamented with rich masonry and painting, divert the spectator to themselves and by occupying their attention often prevent them from seeing the temple. But even in that case the sober and pious man makes his way into the sanctuary, while the crowd remains outside, beguiled like cattle by the adornment round about the temple. If what I mean is not yet clear, let us throw more light on our discourse from an example which I believe is even more exalted. In the case of the god, whose works and creations all these things are, is it equally easy to see both him and his works? Or is it for the sake of these latter that nature from the very beginning has given us eyes, so that when we open them we can see the sun and the moon and the other stars and the whole of heaven, while to see God himself is an

<sup>1</sup>Themistius refers to Constantius Chlorus and Constantine the Great, grandfather and father of Constantius. See the genealogical table in A. A. Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire* (Madison, 1952), 727.



## *Themistius' First Oration*

object of yearning only to the man who in due time reaches this object after having passed through those other things?<sup>2</sup>

But since our discourse has been so successful [3] in reaching such a fitting and very beautiful picture of the subject, let us allow ourselves to be borne along on this and complete the remainder of the theme. Just as, in fact, his deeds reveal the nature of God, so do the emperor's actions make plain his own nature to those who are capable of being guided from deeds to the doer of them. Whither, then, do these deeds take us, and what sort of road do they show us? Not that difficult and dark kind, such as those paths to which most tyrants descend, as though to caverns, but a broad one which preserves its tracks so that they can be seen from afar; not that kind of road that leads finally to some wild and cruel beast, a bear, a boar or a lion, clothed with the name of emperor, but the kind of path that leads to the most peaceable and gentle of all, a heavenly creature which possesses a divine and modest nature, granted by heaven for watchful care over men here on earth.

Before we begin to follow in his footsteps, let us agree on what message concerning him we shall preach in our discourse. All you who are steered by the same helm, if you find in this discourse anything which in the least way cheats you, you must revile it and thrust it from you and cast it away from philosophy, because it does not perform righteous things or things which are consonant with the laws of philosophy. But in every respect in which it gives praise, in all these points it will be telling the truth; and here do not be angry with it and consider that it flatters rather than praises, for nothing is more hostile to truth than flattery, while true praise is testimony to virtue. Every man, in fact, bears witness rightly to that which he knows. Just as the man who understands each of these things is a reliable witness, so are those men who perceive virtue reliable witnesses to it.

<sup>2</sup>Themistius speaks of the monotheistic supreme being in which many pagans, including Themistius himself, believed at this period. When Themistius uses Greek *theos* in this sense, I have written "God" since this seems to be the only way to represent the conception which Themistius had in mind.

You understand, then, what my discourse comprises, namely the theme that only philosophers are witnesses to virtue. But in addition to my own message, my friends, let it also be understood that it is your words—those that you utter all the time concerning the emperor, in the market-places, in the theatres, [4] in your homes, in the baths, while sailing, while journeying, while at leisure, while at work—all of which the discourse has put together to make our collective gift; and what you hear thoughtfully from us is only that which you say at random to each other. If you tell lies, you will likewise hear lies; but if you tell the truth, we shall give your own back to you. But you do speak the truth; for you would not have said these things had you been lying. Consider my words, then, to see whether you recognize them as your own.

Indeed you sing and praise to each other a certain special virtue of the emperor. Shall I speak the name of this virtue? But I know that you who are present will acclaim this name and snatch it, still half-formed, from my lips. And yet I have said to you only what I have taken from you, and I do not pretend that it is a discovery of my own. Your word, indeed, is a very little one, with not many syllables; but I give it back to you like a coin, adding the power of the name as interest.

As for myself, I consider the benevolent<sup>a</sup> emperor to be perfect in the virtue needed for the business in hand, and I believe that nothing is lacking in him to make him worthy of complete praise. Attend, then, to my discourse. Does it seem to you the conduct of a benevolent man to commit injustice and to harm men and conspire against them and to do things of this sort as though he hated them? Or would it be ridiculous to think this? Why, yes; in such affairs it would be necessary for such a man to be just. What then? Should the benevolent man wish to behave intemperately toward mankind, and commit violence against it? Or not at all? How, then, can he prove the name to be true? Here again the name proves his

<sup>a</sup>Gr. *philanthropon* (accusative). Successive uses of the word are not specifically noted in the translation.

self-control. When a man loves something and values it highly, would he hand it over to an enemy who was seeking to destroy it, or would he defend it with all his strength and ward off the harm? Which of these is it the more fitting to call the brave man? The man who, while he fights off the wrath of others, himself [5] destroys his children through his own wrath? Or is it rather the role of benevolence not to be overcome by anger? What else, in justice, can mildness and reasonableness and gentleness be called? You see how, when I knock on that little wood, to test it, the whole swarm of the virtues sounds forth in response,<sup>4</sup> or rather the discourse proceeds on its own way and it does not bar the emperor from going forward more safely. For when he possesses the soul of an emperor, and demonstrates that all good things are bound up in this, then he demonstrates, in addition, what sort of thing this benevolence is. Is he not as far removed from greediness as from cruelty, or as far from arrogance as from savageness? If we speak of intemperance, do we not harm the word itself? For he does not consider that happiness consists of luxurious living, but in doing the fairest deeds, and he guards his soul with reason rather than his body with soldiers, so that he can be attacked by no passion. He will understand, I am sure, that he must first rule himself who wishes to rule others; and that it is shameful, when the athletes at the Olympic games take the greatest care of themselves, by means of diet and exercise, for the champion of the whole world to expose himself unrestrainedly to pleasures. Nevertheless, I find that the thing which has supplied all these qualities to him is his innate love of mankind. The reason for this you may learn from me.

Just as we say that one virtue is the property of man, another that of dogs, and another that of horses, this one, I believe, is characteristic of an emperor, and is imperial before all others; and to it the rest are bound, as though they rose up to a single peak. Moreover, if we scrutinize each of the other virtues carefully, by itself, as though we were turning

<sup>4</sup>Plato, *Theaetetus*, 179 D.

over a coin, [6] we shall find none which bears the imperial character so clearly marked as that which is called courage. This indeed must belong to the emperor, just like all other good qualities. However, if you handle this virtue alone, it does not possess the imperial stamp, but you will see marked upon it rather the character of the soldier or the general; and it is a great glory for a high commander and for a captain to be braver than most men. What then is patience? Or self-control? Are they not, for individuals, healthy conditions of the soul?<sup>5</sup> I maintain that justness, that celebrated virtue, is the fairest possession for an emperor. What indeed is more divine than a man who is just although it is in his power to do wrong? And moderation is very similar. What, then, is the use of a ruler who is not free? Such is the tyrant, who rules others and at the same time makes himself a slave to his passions. Nevertheless, in the case of all of these, there is one thing which I feel. Each of them, if one considers them individually, is a kind of common adornment of mankind, which only becomes imperial when love of mankind sets its stamp upon it, just as the divine stamp, on being set upon plain gold, which hitherto has exhibited merely the beauty of the gold itself, transforms it into a divine likeness.

Let Homer come to speak to us, and let him say, concerning love of mankind, that it is a fair thing:<sup>6</sup> "Never did mine eyes behold a thing so beautiful or so royal; for it is like unto a king." The particular type of virtue that belongs to each man is, I believe, useful to him if it dwells in him, and in the same way is a great harm if he does not possess it. What is there of an imperial quality in a farmer being mild, or a cobbler? How does his mildness help the majority of mankind, when his neighbors hardly know him? How can it fail to be ridiculous to attribute love of mankind to a weaver or an artisan, dwelling in a modest little house, [7] who because of his toil and constant labor hardly ever goes out of doors? Such a man

<sup>5</sup>Plato, *Republic*, 444 D; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, VII, 7, 4 (1150a, 35).

<sup>6</sup>*Iliad*, III, 169-170.



will suffer, if he be not exceedingly discreet and gentle. But when that man has a placid aspect "to whom all peoples are entrusted and so many cares belong,"<sup>7</sup> this is the happiness that is common to all. The shipowner or the merchant will not pray that the Chalcidian strait will be calm—for how many are there who either sail it or see it?—but the Hellespont and the Aegean and the Ionian Sea, which all freight-ships sail. And so if the emperor's soul does not seethe, nor do the gusts of anger and rage blow wildly on it and stir it up, easily fanned as they are by small causes, then it is possible for not only merchants and sailors, but for all men as well to sail through life in safety, both the man who embarks on a great ship and the one who goes on a little skiff, the former with its rudder, the latter depending on its oars. But if one wishes to be a passenger without having paid a contribution, even though the voyage is permitted to him, he will find himself without a wind, becalmed and stationary.

It is dangerous, indeed, for a private citizen to be seized easily by anger, but more dangerous in the case of a man in whose power it is to do whatever he wishes when he is angry. For myself, I consider that anger is a brief period of madness, but even so the man who thus becomes mad through weakness is less harmful to those about him than the man who does so with force and vigor. The one might have to do only with himself, but the disease of the other affects other people as well. How many people, indeed, would Polydamas or Glaucus,<sup>8</sup> when melancholy, beat or slay? Whole tribes and nations, however, would feel the anger of Cambyses.<sup>9</sup>

There are many qualities of the emperor that I admire; but more than all the rest I admire him for having melted the passionate quality of his soul, like iron, and for having rendered

<sup>7</sup>*Iliad*, II, 25, 62.

<sup>8</sup>These two figures in Homer are apparently cited as examples of men who would not normally be subject to fits of melancholy.

<sup>9</sup>Son of Cyrus the Great and king of Persia 529-521 B.C.; he is described by Herodotus as a mad and savage tyrant.

it merciful instead of cruel, or rather serviceable instead of harmful. [8] For it does not allow him to break loose from reason, nor does it allow him, like a horse biting its bridle, to scorn the driver, who, being the only savior of virtue in the soul, dwells throughout life in the man who possesses him. Anger I consider an indulgence more dangerous than sensual pleasure. This latter everyone who is not wholly corrupt will promptly flee because of its great harshness, which plainly fits it only for slaves; and for this reason, perhaps, the commoner sort of insignificant men seem to be superior to this indulgence, while only a very few men can rise wholly above anger. This movement of the soul, in fact, being considered manly and noble, steals in upon many people the more easily under the guise of a virtue.

You may learn from this also that love of mankind is more kingly than all the rest of the band of virtues. The king of all heaven<sup>10</sup> is not called moderate or capable of endurance or brave by mankind. What, indeed, could be alarming to him that he should be in need of courage, or what could be toilsome, that he should overcome it with endurance? What are bodily pleasures to him, that he should not conquer them with self-control? If justice consists of the making of covenants and the maintenance of relations with those who are in agreement with us, how could there be any stain, in this respect, on the life of him who is above all contracts? But as I said, we consider these names unworthy of God, as being trifling and inferior; but when we call him lover of mankind we do him no dishonor. The reason for this is that the mind of man is so made as to consider beneath himself everything that he can find in something which proceeds from himself. Thus our mind ascribes supersubstantial substance and power of higher power and superlatively good goodness to the fount of all things, but does this hesitantly, [9] and takes care over the association of

<sup>10</sup>This again is the monotheistic Supreme Being in whom Themistius and his peers believed.

the words.<sup>11</sup> However, even though it feels thus, it does not view [the name of] love of mankind with suspicion, but takes glory in the name as though it had discovered something peculiarly becoming. How then is that man not truly blessed, who is able to share this virtue with God? How then can this ornament fail to be one which is completely suitable to a king, and superior to all the others, when the father of all does not scorn it? How can it fail to be right for us to hate and scorn those men called tyrants, who, although they have it in their power to emulate God, do not wish to do so?

I always laugh, indeed, as I think of one of the kings of old times, who set great store by possessing a certain divine power and a superior nature, and compelled men to erect temples to himself, as to a god, and statues, but by no means chose to love men as God does. And yet men give those things to God, and God gives this to men. The man who pursues the honors due him does not imitate God, but the man who pursues virtue does; nor is the man who is deemed worthy of those honors an imitator of God, but the man who, being worthy of them, shares them with others. Therefore the man who is not worthy of it uses force to obtain such honor, but the man who is worthy of it does not wish it. This is so in the first case because the man is impious in this matter, and in the second case because the man here recognizes the beings who are superior to him. Thus it is natural that the emperor who is a lover of mankind is dear to God—indeed men who love the same things are dear to each other—for such an emperor alone knows precisely that God must foster with all his power the man who models his mind on his own. This is what it is to admire him, this is the great song of praise, this is the true gift of honor, this is a fitting dedication to a king, namely to set up, not bronze or silver or gold, but one's own soul made into an image of God. The philosopher wishes this, but, lacking power, he seems much of

<sup>11</sup> οὕτως οἷν οὐσίαν τε ὑπερούσιον καὶ ὑπερδύναμον δύναμιν καὶ ὑπεράγαθον ἀγαθότητα προστίθουσιν ἢ διάνοια τῇ πάντων πηγῇ, ὁκνοῦσα ὅμως καὶ ταῦτα εὐλαβομένη τὴν κοινονίαν τῶν ὀνομάτων. Could this be a reference to the disputed terminology involved in the Arian controversy?

the time to limp [10] as he tries to imitate the form. The man who, more than the rest of mortals, is able to accomplish good and chooses to do so, is a pure and complete image of God<sup>12</sup> and is the same thing on earth as he is in heaven, governing, as it were, an allotment of the whole realm, and striving to imitate in part the ruler of the whole.<sup>13</sup> Then the good master, pleased with this service, promotes him in the realm and assigns him a greater share, which he takes away from those less worthy.

Our discourse, having found a most lovely picture of a surpassing example, is eager to linger over the spectacle. Let us, however, bring it down, even though it is unwilling, from divine to human topics, gently consoling it and showing that it will not in this fashion be at variance with itself but that it will achieve a service which, though it is less impressive, will be the more honorable. In general, then, we must consider how no one, whether he be a ruler or a workman, can achieve a fair accomplishment, in performing his labor, if he hates it and is vexed by it. A groom who does not love horses cannot care for them nor can a herdsman who is not accustomed to cattle care for his herd. A flock which the shepherd dislikes will be an easy prey for wolves, and goats will come to misfortune at the hands of a man who hates them. Likewise whoever pastures human flocks must feel love for this kind of creature.<sup>14</sup> He should care for it with pleasure, loving it like a child, not scorning it as though it were hostile, like an evil shepherd who knows only how to do a great deal of milking and to fill the pails with milk, cutting off its nourishment from the flock under his care, taking no thought for good pasturage, or, if there be such at hand, taking it away from them, making himself coarse and fat, but making his cattle thin and withered.

<sup>12</sup> ἄγαλμα τοῦ θεοῦ. In the second sentence preceding this, Themistius uses the phrase εἰκόνα θεοῦ in speaking of the king's soul. See also *Oration XI*, 143 A. These phrases concerning the "image of God" are so common in pagan literature that they do not necessarily show that Themistius had in mind the Christian teaching (cf. II Cor. iv:4).

<sup>13</sup> This is the conception of imperial power which was also set forth by Eusebius of Caesarea in his *Oration on the Thirtieth Anniversary of Constantine*. Themistius is evidently trying to show that the doctrine belongs to the pagans as well as to the Christians.

<sup>14</sup> Compare the description of the Good Shepherd in the Gospel of John, 10.



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Such a man, however, will enjoy his rich living for only a little while, for the herd will quickly perish, [11] and he himself will become a hireling instead of a herdsman, a porter, perhaps, or a charcoal-maker, painfully getting a bare living. The good herdsman, on the contrary, while he will derive much profit from his work, has to give many things in return for it, keeping off wild beasts and looking out for healthy grass. And of course the cattle give a rich return of affection to the herdsman who loves them; dogs love their huntsman, horses love the master who is a friend of horses, and human flocks the king who is a lover of mankind. In no other way can any living thing, indeed, perceive love and be smitten by it, nor can a lover be loved in return, in any other fashion, save by really feeling affection for the man who treats it well, just as it really hates the man who wrongs it. If it is a happy and blessed thing to see people who are our friends, how much more fortunate is it for those whom we see to be our friends? Thus the man who makes it plainly manifest that he bears the title of kingship sees as many friends as he does men. His subjects do not fear him, but fear for him, and this man alone makes no false pretence to kingship. He leads men who wish to follow him, not men who are in terror of him, and his rule is voluntary and not forced. A proof of this is that men seek his rule voluntarily, as though they could not exist without it. No one seeks that which he will fear, but that which he will love. The man who is great through fear merely stands out above others who bow down, and is not really great, while he who rules through love of mankind stands up above men all of whom are upright and exalted. The former adds nothing to himself, to make up his greatness, but cuts it away from his subjects, while the latter, while making all men great, is nevertheless greater than all himself. Neither is that man a lofty creature who, if he does not cut down those around him, cannot rise above them, nor is that man really a king who possesses no free subject. How can such a man differ from the thoughtless rich man who, possessing many slaves, takes pride and boasts

that he is better off [12] than all of his servants? The work of a true king, I believe, is not to humble the upright, but to raise those who have fallen, so that, so far as lies in his power, he may be more happy than happy men. The true tyrant does not wish to be more blessed than fortunate men, but more blessed than wretched men, just as, I believe, a jailer who possesses many prisoners, loves them for his own sake, and rejoices because he is more fortunate than those who are in fetters. And it is for this reason, I am sure, that the Persian monarch is far from the title of king. He not only understands that all his subjects are slaves and makes them such, but he even makes slaves of his relatives, of his brother and actually of his son, to whom he is to hand on his rule. The man is really absurd who, thinking that his brother is his slave, likewise thinks that he himself is free.

There is no advantage in having one's crown upright, but one's character prostrate; in having a sceptre of gold, but a soul more worthless than lead; in clothing the body in light and varicolored garments, while exhibiting a soul that is bare of virtue; in shooting, to hit birds, but in counsel, to miss wisdom; or for a man to be trained to sit easily on a horse, but to fall more easily away from justice. The man who loves things that do not belong to him in any way, while he destroys more than he gains, is deceived; he is unjust in his desire, foolish in his purpose, and silly in his hope. We consider, indeed, that the happiness of such a man is more abominable than the offense of Oedipus, to whom, the legend is, his mother bore children who were also his brothers. How is it remarkable, in fact, for a man to degenerate from reason when he has degenerated from nature itself? [13] How does it not follow that a man will resist the weapons of a king when he resists him in every detail in his way of life? In the same way it is impossible for a disciplined man to admire an unbridled one, for a gentle man to admire a harsh one, and for a civilized man to admire one who lives in a manner fitting for wild beasts. There is surely nothing more inimical to virtue than evil, nor is there anything that hates and despises it more. Every bad man, I am sure,

looks upon a good man as a kind of manifest refutation, when shame is seen in a clearer light alongside the good.

This then is what destroyed him [the Persian king], not Mesopotamia, but the emperor's virtue shining near him.<sup>15</sup> Nor does he understand—and this would be the sole benefit of the juxtaposition—how to turn over the rudder of his mind to the man, now near him, who understands how to steer it, and thus tie his skiff to the great vessel. This would be better, I am sure, than for a man sailing a fragile craft, without tillers or the rest of the gear, to keep up a fight against a great strong trireme which possesses many infantry and many rowers and marines, and a helmsman who has been brought up on rudders from his swaddling clothes. Such a man will conduct a sorry sea-battle, even though for a short time he may, through his lightness, escape being boarded.

But we must recall our discourse and turn it back from the track upon which it began to set out. The king, then, who loves mankind stands in real awe of mankind, for he feels respect especially for those whom he especially loves. This is the reason why he will not easily do a man wrong. And in the same way such a king will especially value the praise that comes to him from men. For every lover, [14] indeed, the thing that is good above all others is to be praised by his darling. And the man who desires to be praised, wishes to be good, for it is thus that he can win love. How much more fitting, by the Graces! is it for the emperor to be called a lover of mankind than a lover of wine or a lover of pleasure or a lover of gold or a lover of silver. Most of them, though they rule men, give their real care to money; and while they desire to be rich, and suppose that they are, they are really poorer than men who are quite well-to-do. Often men sell their clothing, because of poverty, but some rulers sell their good name for money. If it is disgraceful for an athlete to concede the olive-crown in the Olympic games for pay, it is more disgraceful for an emperor to sell the crown of virtue for money. Every rule stands in

<sup>15</sup>The reference is to Constantius' victory over Sapor at Singara; see Dindorf's commentary, 499.

need, as though they were its tools, of both honor and punishment, the one to increase virtue, the other to check evil-doing. The guilty and inhuman tyrant, however, surpasses the faults themselves in his punishments of them, while he fails to pay honor to deeds well done. What gift do we know of, coming from him, that is so great as the punishment of removing a man's skin? The prizes awarded by our gentle emperor are more lofty even than his good works, while his punishments are more tolerable than the faults for which they are given. It is more in the real character of love of mankind to do good than to do evil. Philosophy understands better the reason for this; and he [the emperor] seems to be the ruler of rewards, not the ruler of punishment. It is for this reason that from the beginning of time the law has put honors in the hands of kings, but punishments in those of the public executioners, giving the whole task to the executioner, but to the king merely the issuing of the order, since the one thing is fitting and the other necessary.

[15] It is not in the same fashion that the victorious general rewards the preeminent man and punishes the deserter, nor does the driver goad the rebellious horse in the same way that he praises and urges on the tractable one. The very appearance of the king is largely composed of honor, not of punishment. Of such character are the purple and the crown, so that in distributing honors, he shares those which he himself has acquired, while in awarding punishments he gives those things which he in no wise possesses. But just as a reward turns men toward good deeds, while punishment turns them away from wickedness, it is more natural for the ruler to accomplish good than evil. In the one case he merely removes men from evil, while in the other he shares the good with them. Nothing, indeed, so sharpens and helps to increase virtue as a firm hope in its rewards. There is in truth in us, as Plato says,<sup>10</sup> a certain creature that is not a child, but something like a noble

<sup>10</sup>I have not been able to find a passage in Plato corresponding to Themistius' ostensible quotation. Themistius may have been quoting from memory, and may have had several passages in mind; or he may have been alluding to *Republic*, 549 E—550 C, changing the phraseology rather freely.



youth, a zealous lover of preeminence, whom, as he often falls asleep over many things, the expectation of honor wakes and rouses up, planting in him an incentive toward virtue sharper than any gadfly. Moreover, it is perhaps more profitable, in any task, to take thought for worthy men than for the unworthy. Neither does the helmsman of a ship take equal care of both the sailor and the merchant passenger, nor does the physician of the body take the same care of the hair and of the eyes.

If watchful care for good things is better than care for evil things, and if good men stand in need of reward, while evil men require punishment, it is better for the ruler to be more inclined toward the bestowal of honor than toward punishment, since most punishments are not carried out for the sake of assisting wrong-doers—for they take away the soul instead of aiding it—but seem instead to be of advantage only to the rest of mankind. It is because of this, O most wise ruler, that you have removed death from the list of punishments, thinking it a ridiculous remedy which does not aid the sick [16] but is thought to be of advantage to the healthy. Or is this the wisdom of this fine remedy, that it does not cure those to whom it is applied, but is of value only to those to whom it is not applied? To my way of thinking, every cure should be of more value to the man who receives it than to others. It will be of value not only by destroying, but by improving. The highly skilled physician is not the one who cuts off the ailing leg, but the one who attempts to cure and restore it.

Shall I tell you the reason for this opinion? The law of former times, attempting, I believe, to make itself redoubtable, threatened the sword in most cases, and proclaimed the penalty of the same death for transgressions which are sometimes of unequal gravity. The reason was that law cannot maintain itself if it sets out to make subtle distinctions concerning transgressions. The dissimilarities of human affairs, being beyond any distinction, lead into infinity any man who attempts to follow them. Hence, I believe, it seemed best to make one rough declaration concerning all crimes and for all time, so that it might be

possible to be in a sound position with respect to things which had not yet appeared. This alone was left in the power of the lawgiver. And for this reason the law, like a discontented and self-willed man, usually gave the same answers to people who did not ask the same things. In this situation, with the law, under this constraint, making the same pronouncements concerning unlike things, the severe punisher is able to grasp the law's words and to adhere tightly to its pronouncements. Therefore the law often destroys a man whom it would have set free if it had been able to make another statement, thus committing unlawful acts in a kind of lawful fashion. The ruler who loves humanity, however, pardons the letter of the law [17] for its inability to be exact, and himself adds to it that which it cannot accomplish, since, of course, he himself is the law and is above laws. To make such an addition is to take away the savageness of the law. Just as when a thoroughbred dog is irritated and yelping, its master calms and soothes its rage by gently laying hold of it, so the ruler who is a lover of humanity often softens the anger of the law, and if it chances to be attempting to execute a man, he persuades it to punish him by exile; or if it is trying to exile another man, the ruler finds it enough to confiscate some of his property. In the same way it is the role of clement justice, which is sympathetic toward those of like nature to itself, to determine, on the other hand, the general nature of crimes, and to make distinction between error, wrongdoing and misadventure.<sup>17</sup> Wrongdoing is the transgression of a man who desires to act in that way, and makes the choice of calculation. Error is a movement resulting from accident, when some desire or anger has suddenly leaped out before one, though the soul does not entirely give way to the movement. Misadventure, finally, is wholly a kind of mischance and mistake that attaches itself to some one from some source or other. For example, let us make our discourse clearer by concrete examples. It is possible to kill a man either deliberately, or when seized by anger, or by mere chance, for example

<sup>17</sup>On this distinction, see Aristotle, *Nicom. Ethics*, V, 8, 7; *Rhetor.*, I, 13, 16. See also Themistius, *Oration IX*, 123 D.

in athletic exercises or in hunting, just as in the tale of the Phrygian Adrastus, a fugitive who had taken refuge with the Lydian king, who, while hunting, aimed at an animal but missed it and instead struck with his spear the son of the man who had given him hospitality.<sup>18</sup>

It is the role of love of humanity to study these things carefully, and not to deal out recklessly punishment for what has happened, but to seek an occasion for moderation. If a man supposes that clemency is in itself a good thing, but that wickedness is increased by it, let him point out the evil and show how it has been nourished and has grown to such an extent, and point out what has created so great a condition of vice, [18] or what sort of nurture it enjoyed, when first this tragic state of affairs became manifest, and fire and sword served to affright it.

Our ruler has well demonstrated that wickedness is not nourished<sup>19</sup> by his own love of mankind, but that it is withered by it, and that it rather gives way and yields place more gently when justice stretches out its hand to touch it. These things are not matters of hearsay, but are to be seen; and my discourse takes a strange and unnatural subject in speaking of them.<sup>20</sup> It takes upon itself, indeed, to double the tremendous praise which up to this point it has been describing, instead of interweaving another with it, as would be usual. But see how great will be the addition which I shall try to make to this praise. To have accomplished these things at his [the emperor's] time of life is worthy, not only of double, but of manifold praise. Could one say that a temperate old man and a temperate youth are equally to be admired? Or that a mild and gentle man of advanced age and such a man in his prime are within the same category? No wisdom is needed to understand this. But in the case of private citizens, a longer lapse of time shows that they are worthy of more. It is not as marvellous for virtue to

<sup>18</sup>The story is told at length by Herodotus, I, 35-45.

<sup>19</sup>On the phraseology, cf. Plato, *Republic*, 550 B.

<sup>20</sup>I.e., it is not right or necessary to speak of them at all,

follow upon age, as for time to alter or to run by, and especially is this true of that part of virtue which, while it is akin to age, is at variance with youth. That steadiness and calm and gentleness should occur in the age which before all others stirs up and disturbs the soul, I should not have supposed happened, nor can I easily believe that it will happen. On the contrary, men of this age usually are quick of temper; they dart off and are swept away [19] by their passions like ships without ballast.<sup>21</sup> The ruler, however, like a man who steers by means of his intelligence, compels the sea of youth to calm itself, and to him alone is that phrase "as gentle as a father"<sup>22</sup> fitting, but because of his virtue, not because of his age.

Consider, by the god of friendship,<sup>23</sup> how difficult it is, in the midst of so much good fortune, to preserve fairness. Most men are unable, through weakness, to support good fortune, which is like a burden; but it is more difficult at an age like this, at which men preserve decorum least of all, and only under compulsion.

But let us put a fitting crown to our discourse and offer it as a perfect gift to our ruler. The ruler who loves mankind, then, is he not also especially a lover of his friends? Indeed, though he thinks so much of mankind, he sets greater store by his friends, and even though he loves those who live under him, he will especially love those who live with him, and if he can bear least of all to harm his subjects, he can in no way give pain to his companions. He understands that wealth of neither gold nor silver nor of the prized stones is of such great profit to a ruler as the wealth of true friendship. For the man who must hear many things, see many things, and at the same time take thought for many things, his two ears and his two eyes and his one body, and the one soul which dwells in it, are very little indeed. But if he is rich in friends, he will see far and will hear things that are not near him, and he will know

<sup>21</sup>Plato, *Theaetetus*, 144 A.

<sup>22</sup>*Iliad*, XXIV, 770; *Odyssey*, II, 47, 234, etc.

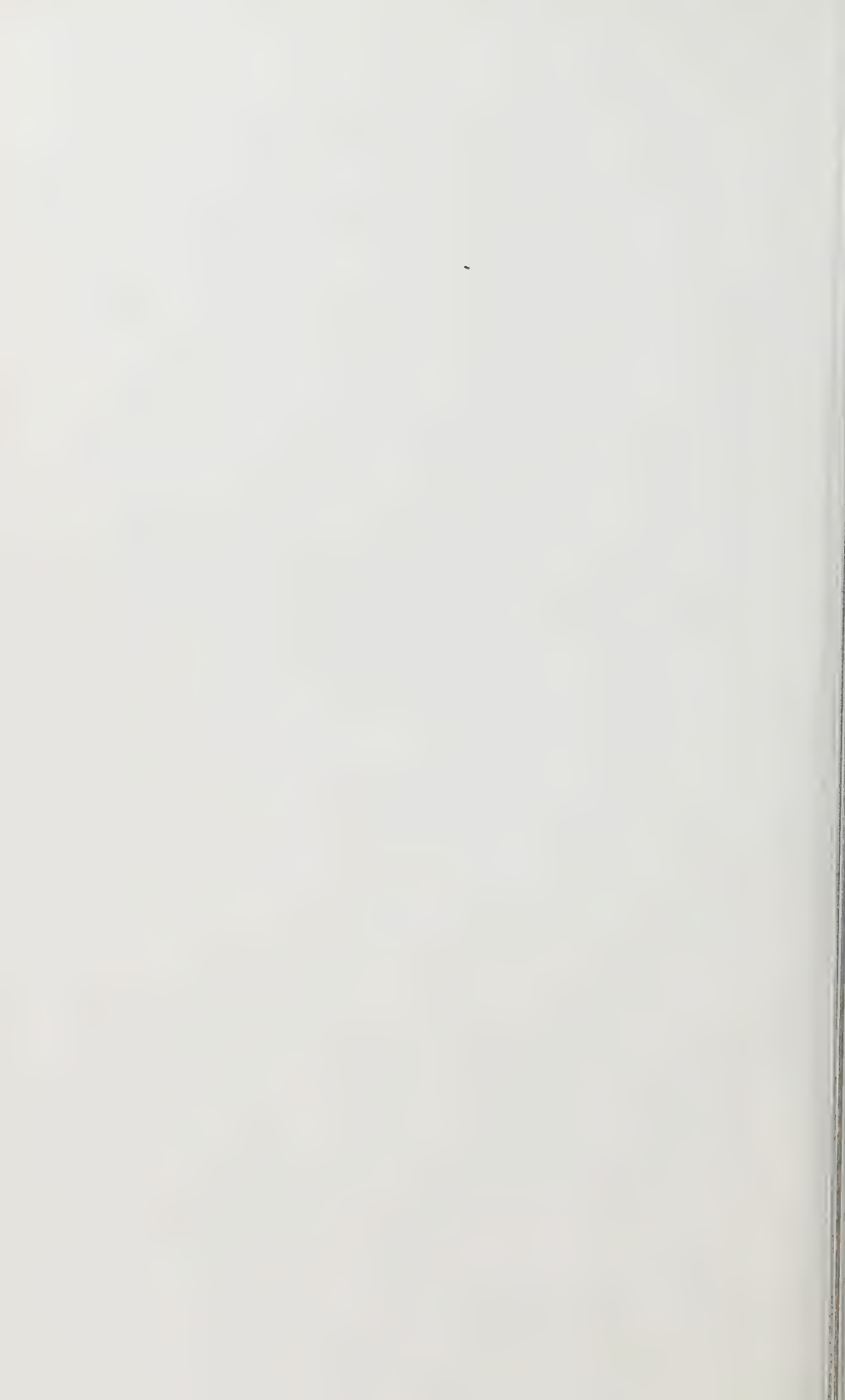
<sup>23</sup>Zeus Philios.



### *Themistius' First Oration*

what is far away, like the seers, and he will be present at the same time in many places, like a god. Since he knows this, he clings to each of his friends as though to his own body and his own soul and with his friendship is alone exalted and at the same time secure. With tyrants, such a height is dangerous. When any one thinks he is walking with them on equal terms, they thrust him away and cast him down [20] a steep cliff or into a deep pit. They raise men up, not that they may be exalted, but that they may cast them down from a height. But many of those who fall lay hold of those who thrust them down and bear them down with themselves. Those, however, who touch our ruler's hand know that they have hold of a safe cable,<sup>21</sup> and that they will hold it to the end. This, from your comrade philosophy, is the true and honest and pure offering: not one which flows from the tip of the tongue while the soul within speaks the contrary, but such as dwells within and comes forth from the lips as well. From such things as cause a man to falsify his praises philosophy is free. It has no regard whatever for wealth and requires no reward. possessing its own source of honor within itself.

<sup>21</sup>Plato, *Laws*, 893 B.



# A JEWISH-GNOSTIC AMULET OF THE ROMAN PERIOD

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A MOST UNUSUAL AMULET has been kindly loaned me from the de Clercq Collection. Two sides of it were published by de Ridder in the catalogue of that collection.<sup>1</sup> I reproduced his illustrations of these two faces in my *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period* and discussed the amulet inadequately.<sup>2</sup> Now that I have been able to study the object itself, I see that it has much greater interest. I have shown it to several scholars and suggested that they publish it, but since they found the inscriptions an "incomprehensible combination of letters" they did not wish to do so. With no pretense at fully understanding it myself, I feel that the piece should be made available for scholarly discussion.

It is of black steatite, 37x27x14 mm.,<sup>3</sup> with the four

<sup>1</sup>*Collection de Clercq, Catalogue*, 1911, VII, ii, plate XXX, no. 3514; cf. 796f.

<sup>2</sup>See III, fig. 1145, and II, 268.

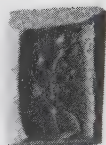
<sup>3</sup>The photographs here vary slightly in scale.



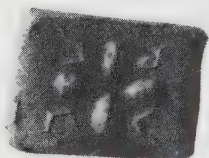
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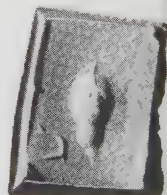
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8



9

PLATE 3 — PARIS. DE CLERCQ COLLECTION. BLACK STEATITE AMULET



## *A Jewish-Gnostic Amulet of the Roman Period*

corners so beveled off that space is made for four additional little symbols, nine in all. Professor Gershom Scholem wrote me that in the inscription on the amulet the letter *nun* has an early form found in inscriptions of about the second to the fourth century. This is my only basis for dating the amulet, since the untutored work of provincial stone cutters changed little for many centuries. It seems safe to consider it a third or fourth century piece. As to provenance we have no information whatever; presumably it was produced in the Eastern part of the Roman Empire.

One of the two chief sides of the amulet, fig. 8, has a design, well cut, of Adam and Eve on either side of the tree with its fruit. A snake curls up the tree in the usual way, but reaches out its open mouth toward Eve's face, as she plucks an apple and gives another to Adam. A *cheth* stands beside Adams, and a *resh* or *daleth* beside Eve. The action seems to determine which of the two each of these figures represents. Difficulties are at once apparent. The *cheth* beside Adam is Eve's initial in Hebrew, and the gesture of Adam's hand to the abdomen suggests the gesture of Aphrodite and of her eastern predecessors. But the picking of the apple is so clearly the action of Eve that we can make no other identification here. The letters, like those with the other little symbols, may be initials of magical words.

One is also struck at once by another distinctive feature. In the earliest Christian representations,<sup>4</sup> the couple always stand in shame covering their genitals. Here neither of them makes the slightest attempt to do so. This will seem important for interpretation. I should guess that the distinct shame expressed in the Christian representation is a Christian addition to some such original as we have here. Our amulet probably shows us the original design, and possibly the earliest Adam and Eve in existence.

On the side opposite this stands a design, unique so far as

<sup>4</sup>G. Wilpert, *Le pitture delle catacombe romane*, 1903, II, plates 70, 2; 93; 101; 166, 2; 169; 171; 186, 2; 197, 2; 211, 3; 240, 1; I, 299-302. The earliest of these are roughly contemporary with our amulet: H. Leclercq in F. Cabrol, *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie* (1907), I, i, 510.

I know, fig. 2. At the center is a band divided into twelve sections, and with a tiny boss inside each section. The band must be the zodiac, represented on so small a scale that the artist despaired of distinguishing the signs and showed by the bosses that the signs should be there. This band encircles a mound, an omphalos, and round the omphalos coils a snake with open mouth and a protruding forked tongue. The snake round the omphalos was a recognized symbol of Apollo.<sup>5</sup> It appears at least twice in Pompeian wall paintings,<sup>6</sup> and on Roman coins of cities in Lydia and Thrace.<sup>7</sup> Karo thinks that the snake in this period would have referred to the medical power of Apollo as father of Aesculapius, rather than to the ancient Python that Apollo killed in taking over Delphi. In the Pompeian pictures the relationship seems more with the Dionysiac and mystic snakes than with either Asclepius or Python. The snake and omphalos are definitely solar symbols, and hence appropriate in place of Helios within the zodiac. The snake has its mouth open in an exaggerated way so that its tongue may be seen. We now notice that, much smaller as the snake of Eden is represented, its mouth is also open and the tongue seems protruding. This, and that it extends its mouth toward Eve's face, will seem meaningful as we continue.

The other symbols on the side with the zodiac are, at the right, a wreath with a *shin* above it, and, at the left, a crescent, with horns down, and with a *cheth* above it. These apparently represent the sun and moon, with the *skin* for *shemesh*, sun, and the *cheth* for *chodesh*, new moon, that aspect of the moon especially important in Jewish life. Below the sun are seven

<sup>5</sup>G. Karo, "Omphalos," C. Daremberg and E. Saglio, *Dictionnaire des antiquités grecques et romaines* (1904), IV, 1, 197-200. The most important study is that of Hans Leisegang, "The Mystery of the Serpent," *The Mysteries*, Papers from the Eranos Yearbooks, Joseph Campbell, ed. (1955), 194-260 (Bollingen Series, XXX, 2). This was originally published in *Eranos-Jahrbücher*, VII, 1939.

<sup>6</sup>H. Gusman, *Pompei*, London (1900), 112; A. Mau, "Scavi di Pompei," *Mittheilungen des Kaiserlich Deutschen Archaeologischen Instituts, Roemische Abtheilung*, XI (1896), 68.

<sup>7</sup>R. S. Poole, *Catalogue of the Greek Coins of the Tauric Chersonese, Sarmatia, Dacia, Moesia, Thrace, &c.* (1877), 89 (*Catalogue of the Greek Coins in the British Museum*, III); B. V. Head, *Catalogue of the Greek Coins of Lydia* (1901), plates XV, 1; XVII, 3 (*Catalogue of the Greek Coins in the British Museum*, XXII).

## *A Jewish-Gnostic Amulet of the Roman Period*

very small bosses apparently the planets, the bosses arranged to recall the Pythagorean figure of the tetractys of six points, but here with the seventh point below it.<sup>8</sup> This arrangement of points in an equilateral triangle to represent what the Pythagoreans called a "triangle number" seems an attempt to make the seven resemble the ten, the number more usually shown in this way. Philo of Alexandria frequently tries to make the seven like the ten in being a perfect number. At the left of the zodiac a single little boss stands by itself, and I cannot even guess at what it might represent.

The whole design reflects current syncretism. That the snake-omphalos figure should take the place of Helios, and that the obverse should show the snake with the tree of Eden suggests that the amulet reflects a Jewish gnostic environment. We are used to Helios in the zodiac in the mosaics of Jewish synagogues," but in these he appears in his personal form driving the quadriga. There is presumably some connection between the central snakes of the designs on these two faces of the amulet, and it is in the symbolism of the Naasenes that we have perhaps a slightly Christianized echo of this gnosticism. Of the snake the Naasenes said:

*They say that the snake is the damp substance, as did Thales of Miletus, and that of all beings whatsoever, mortal or immortal, animate or inanimate, not a one can endure without it [or him]. And all things are subject to it, and it is good, and has within itself, as within the horn of the one-horned bull, the beauty of all other things; and to all things which exist it contributes their bloom and what is most proper in accordance with their nature.<sup>10</sup>*

<sup>8</sup>On the tetractys see John Burnet, *Early Greek Philosophy*, 4th ed. (1930), 102-104.

<sup>9</sup>See my *Symbols*, III, figs. 640, 644; cf. 992, 994; I, 217, 258.

<sup>10</sup>Hippolytus, *Elenchus*, V, ix, 13f. This reference to Thales as one who selected water because of its spermatric symbolism and power may well be based directly or indirectly upon a statement of Aristotle in the *Metaphysics*, where Thales' doctrine is connected with the myth of the Ocean and Tethys and is said by Aristotle to have been inspired by the life-giving and creative power of the damp seminal fluid, since all plants and animals are nourished by water, and, most peculiarly, since heat arises from water.

This idea of the snake as the ultimate source of life expressed itself ritually in having the snake coil about ritualistic loaves of bread:

*it is their custom to keep and feed a snake in a basket, which they bring out from its lair at the time of their mysteries. They spread loaves upon a table, and summon this same serpent, which, as its lair is opened, comes forth. And so according to its intelligence and knavery, aware indeed of their folly, it goes up upon the table and coils itself about the loaves. And this they say is the perfect sacrifice. Thereupon, as I have been told, they not only break the loaves about which the snake had been coiled and give it to the communicants, but also each of them kisses the snake on the mouth. This they do after the snake has been tamed by some sorcery, or after the animal has been cajoled by some other diabolic trick looking toward deceit. And they worship the thing, and call "Eucharist" that which came into being through its coiling [about it]. And then, as they say, they offer up a hymn through it to the Father above. So do they celebrate their mysteries."*

In this passage the snake consecrates the loaves by coiling about them, with the result that something "comes into being" through its activity—that is, a sort of transubstantiation of the loaves. This is the Eucharist, the perfect sacrifice, the mystic rite. The snake in the basket certainly came from Dionysiac rites, and it may well be that in those rites the snake was used in some such way as is here described. So it is extremely important that on one of the smaller faces the basket appears with the lid typically open, fig. 1. Lehmann<sup>12</sup> has suggested that in Dionysiac representation the emergence of the snake

<sup>11</sup>Epiphanius, *Panarion*, XXXVII, 6-8, K. Holl, ed., *Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte* (1922), II, 57f.

<sup>12</sup>K. Lehmann-Hartleben and E. C. Olsen, *Dionysiac Sarcophagi in Baltimore*, 1942, 15; in n. 11 he refers to Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, II, 14 (F. Conybeare, ed., in Loeb series, 1, 157).



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from its basket with its forked tongue exposed is a sign of kissing. The exaggerated representation of the snake's mouth on the amulet takes on meaning in the light of such remarks, especially the snake reaching toward Eve's face. The snake round the omphalos as it appears on the amulet may well have inspired the ritual of the snake round the loaves.

The slight "Christian" elements in the Naasenes have obviously been grafted upon an original pagan, or pagan-Jewish, gnostic formulation and ritual. I strongly suspect that this amulet shows the snake as the solar source of light, life, and salvation, and the incident in Eden, which here has no marks of shame or humiliation, as the giving to man of his gnostic knowledge. For the snake could become the savior in Jewish and Christian gnosticism as the one who defied the Creator God and brought man gnosis of good and evil. This gnostic interpretation seems to me much more likely than the other possibility, that the cosmic and solar snake on one side saves one from the bad snake of Eden on the other, since I see no sign of evil in the Adam and Eve scene. The two snakes seem to me identical.<sup>13</sup>

The forms represented on the sides of the amulet present much greater difficulty. There are eight of these narrow faces, one of which, the long side at the tip, has only holes for a metal ring or a string so that the amulet could be worn. The little designs on the other faces, as the Hebrew letters with them show, are some of them carved upside down in relation with the face that bears the inscription. Why this should have been done baffles me completely. To help future students I have reproduced all the designs with what seems to me to be the right side up, but I have indicated in each case when, in relation to the face with the inscription, a design is cut on the amulet upside down.

<sup>13</sup>On the solar snake at this time see my *Symbols*, II, 261-269; Robert Gordis, "The Knowledge of Good and Evil in the Old Testament and the Qumran Scrolls," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, LXXVI (1957), 123-138, has most recently renewed the age old interpretation of the Fall as being the introduction of sexual activity.

Adjoining the face with holes for the ring is one of the small beveled edges having the design of fig. 6, a design of squares or blocks, made into a pyramid which de Ridder seems to have had in mind when he mentioned "a house of three stories."<sup>11</sup> A *cbeth* (perhaps a *be*), is above it at the left. That this is a "house with three stories" may be true, but it suggests many other things. It resembles the ziggurat of Babylonian seals which von der Osten tells us symbolized a mountain.<sup>12</sup> It also recalls the way cities are represented on the sixth-century mosaic map of Palestine from Medeba.<sup>13</sup> There is a vague possibility that this may refer to the heavenly city. Professor Robert Grant recalled to me that the same form was used for the funerary pyre by which the Roman emperors of the second and third centuries were apotheosized.<sup>14</sup> It also represented the pharos or lighthouse. The form had from the beginning probably some historic continuity of symbolism. Herodian<sup>15</sup> himself noted that the pyre and pharos looked alike. The pharos was used on funerary monuments to represent the saving light that brings one into immortality.<sup>16</sup> Since fire was associated with both, and both symbolized deification, as indeed did the ancient ziggurat and the heavenly city, an abstract representation such as that on the amulet could have been engraved with any of these in mind. I suspect that the form had become a symbol of access to divine power in its own right, and that it appears on the amulet as such.

<sup>11</sup>This is upside down with reference to the face having the long inscription.

<sup>12</sup>H. H. von der Osten, *Ancient Oriental Seals in the Collection of Mr. Edward T. Newell* (1934), 115; cf. fig. 9, no. 664 (The University of Chicago Oriental Institute Publication, XXII).

<sup>13</sup>I. M. Casanowicz, *A Colored Drawing of the Medeba Mosaic Map of Palestine in the United States National Museum* (1915, Reprinted as No. 2111 from the *Proceedings of the United States National Museum*, XLIX, 359-376, with plate). Further bibliography is given there.

<sup>14</sup>The pyre is described by Harold Mattingly, *Coins of the Roman Empire in the British Museum*, V (1950), clxxxix, n., and is often represented on coins of the period: e.g. *ibid.*, plates 20, 9; 65, 17f.; 66, 7. See Herodian, IV, ii.

<sup>15</sup>*Ad loc. cit.* Herodian notes also that the shape is that of a ladder, which was another symbol of divine ascent. The form probably suggested ascent, if it was not designed to suggest it, from the time of the ziggurat. The ladder as a symbol will be discussed in the forthcoming Vol. VIII of my *Symbols*.

<sup>16</sup>Leclercq, "Phare," in Cabrol, *Dictionnaire*, XIV, 671-673. The Christian tombstone in his fig. 10156 with crown and palm leaf is likewise ambiguous. To me it looks more like the pyre on coins than any of his representations of the pharos.

## *A Jewish-Gnostic Amulet of the Roman Period*

The next face, fig. 4, shows what at first seems a four petal rosette; but closer examination reveals that the four petals are four masks, their chins toward the center. I call them masks only because they have no necks. Beside each is a letter, a *kaph* beside three and a *qoph* beside one. The letters turn with the faces, except that the *qoph* is upside down as compared with the face beside it. Beyond this a beveled face, fig. 5, upside down, shows a branch with leaves at the left and berries or grapes at the right, and a *kaph* below.

The inscription, fig. 6, stands on the next face, the long face opposite the ring. Scholem wrote me after he had seen it: "The letters do not represent any known magical words, but they might, of course, be an abbreviation of the first letters of a biblical verse or some other combinations." While the inscription cannot be read, the form of its letters not only suggests a date, as we have said, but definitely shows that it is a Jewish piece, although so many pagan elements had been included. One working with charms and amulets is constantly annoyed by strings of meaningless letters, which one usually calls magical vowels, letters, or, in desperation, gibberish. Secret formulas with magical power were thus carried about, and only the initiate was told how to pronounce them.

Beside the inscription, upside down, is fig. 7, apparently a four legged table with a *gimel* under it. The table may or may not refer to a mystic or sacramental meal. Beyond this is a surface having at right angles a female head and neck, with a *kaph* beside it, fig. 9. The head recalls the female heads so frequently shown on the tiles and in the dado of the Dura-Europos synagogue and a head at Dura which Kraeling properly calls "the ubiquitous Demeter-Persephone of the eastern Mediterranean."<sup>20</sup> It also appeared in the Palestinian synagogue at Yafa.<sup>21</sup> The little spike going up from the head is perhaps a reminiscence of a form such as appeared on the head of female heads at

<sup>20</sup>Carl H. Kraeling, *The Synagogue* (1956), 42 (The Excavations at Dura-Europos conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters. Final Report VIII, pt. 1). He illustrates many of them: see his plates VIII, XVIII., and 247f.

<sup>21</sup>See my *Symbols*, III, fig. 993.

the Dura synagogue.<sup>22</sup> Apparently Jews attached great significance to this head, though what it meant to them there is no basis for saying.

The last face, fig. 1, is the one already mentioned, where, upside down, appears to be the Dionysiac basket with open lid. A *kaph* is cut under it. This basket is in two parts; the upper is cylindrical, with diagonals crossing it, and the lower part is larger, boat shaped, with seven little bosses on it. The Dionysiac basket is very unusual in Jewish remains; I know it only on the unique sarcophagus from the Catacomb Torlonia at Rome.<sup>23</sup> This basket and similar pagan baskets usually have the Dionysiac snake coming out of them. But the snake seems implied by the form of the basket on the amulet, and by the other snakes.

That these forms on the smaller faces of the amulet somehow all belong with the gnostic snake designs must be assumed without question, but I have no guess as to how they do. It seems highly likely that the cosmic scenes of the main face reflect the Deity of a Jewish-gnostic sect, and brought the wearer that Deity's protection. How the other symbols are to be understood is quite as perplexing as the meaning of the inscriptions. We shall indeed know a great deal about ancient Jewish magic when we can fully understand this amulet. Meanwhile it is well to keep such objects, and their challenge, in mind.

<sup>22</sup>Kraeling, *Synagogue*, Plate, XXXIX, 3, 4.

<sup>23</sup>See my *Symbols*, III, fig. 833.



# ANCIENT CLASSICAL ALTERNATIVES AND APPROACHES TO THE IDEA OF PROGRESS\*

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THE GREEKS DID NOT HAVE a historical view of the life of mankind as a progress of advancing achievement, realization and expansion of values. Their greatest historian, Thucydides, did not contemplate the events of his time in their rhythm with the ongoing march of bygone ages. On his first page he tells us that his inquiries into remote antiquity and into his more recent past had not revealed to him anything "on a great scale, either in war or in other matters." Where does a Classical poet sing: "I, the heir of all the ages?"

Shall we, then, follow the example of the chronicler who was content with the bare statement that there are no snakes in Iceland? But we shall be failing to realize the ancient Classical alternatives to the belief in progress, and also some significant

\*This article is the substance of an introductory chapter in a historical and systematic study of the Belief in Progress.

approaches to this idea. These contending views reveal important characteristics of the Classical temper which any student of the modern ideas of progress should grasp and keep in mind.

Before tracing some of the ancient Classical approaches to the idea of progress we should examine the Greek alternatives to it which in some measure persisted also in Roman thought. They are mainly two: the view of a series of world ages marked by an increasing degeneration, and the view of the cosmic process as eternal recurrence. The first of these ideas pervaded Greek mythology and persisted in the world outlook of some poets and philosophers. The second was a theory of cosmological speculation, with disturbing inferences.

It should be stated clearly at the outset that neither one of these two ideas commanded general acceptance. We cited the first page of Thucydides, but as we read beyond the first page we can follow his account of the rude early beginnings of the Greek tribes, unsettled in habitation and in customs, many of them pirates and lawless nomads. While he unrolls before us the tragic events of the Peloponnesian war, Thucydides is not marked by any nostalgia for bygone primitive glories. Even in her disaster his Athens could not lose the memories which he engraved in his version of Pericles' funeral oration. And he appealed to the undoubted judgment of posterity: "I have written my work . . . as a possession for all time."<sup>1</sup>

The issue between the doctrines of historical degeneration and eternal recurrence was not always drawn sharply. Both were held by many minds in ambiguous indecision. And alongside of them there were also some approaches to the belief in progress.

The view of a world series of periodic degeneration has been called the doctrine of cultural primitivism. In our time it has been studied by Professors Lovejoy and Boas with thorough analysis and the most extensive and detailed documentation

<sup>1</sup>Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 15, transl. Richard Crawley, Everyman's Library ed.

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across the entire range of Classical literature. Tradition has called it the belief in a bygone Golden Age. Hesiod gave us an early version of it in his *Works and Days*. The deathless Olympian gods made first of all "a golden race of mortal men who . . . lived like gods without sorrow of heart, remote and free from toil and grief."<sup>2</sup> The portrayal of their blessed light of existence is in sharp contrast to the series of lower and lower types of humanity which darkened the succeeding ages. Physically and mentally the men of the Silver Age were inferior to their predecessors. And down the scale of baser metals, the Age of Bronze and the Age of Iron marked the spreading degeneration of mankind.

The golden men lived in justice and joy and ease. Peaceful were their lives, and their death was as a gentle sleep. The silver men were slow-witted and insolent, without piety, so that they angered the gods, who did away with them. The brazen men were a race of terrible warriors, violent and hard of heart. They crushed and destroyed each other and without any abiding achievement sank into the chill muck of Hades. Ours is the age of the men of iron; in toil and grief we grind out our days; wrangling and trickery sully our home life and our dealings with each other. Neither justice nor reverence is to be found among us, but "envy, foul mouthed, delighting in evil."<sup>3</sup>

Hesiod bewailed his lot, that he had to be born in the Age of Iron. He interrupted his account of the steady deterioration of the human stock by his chant of a great Age of Heroes, between the brazen and the iron men. Some of them were war-like like the men of bronze and perished in dread battles; but others, nobler and more righteous, still live without grief or want in the Islands of the Blessed. Was Hesiod's heroic episode in the dismal tale of human degradation a hint of possible future hope of restoration, or was it a note of added dismay? Zeus the far-seeing that lets us live in the miserable iron age

<sup>2</sup>Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 109ff., transl. H. G. Evelyn-White, Loeb Classical Library ed.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 195f.

might just as well have allowed us to be born in the heroic mould.

The Golden Age doctrine persisted as an alternative view of the course of human existence in the thought of both philosophers and poets, but it was slanted differently in various cosmic outlooks. We may overlook minds of lesser note, for Plato and Vergil and Ovid claim our attention. Plato did not specifically favor a theory of golden primitive perfection followed by a periodic series of increasing degeneration. He seems to have regarded the myth of the Golden Age, along with some of his own myths, as an imaginative version of a deep truth. The truth here seems to be this, that human well-being and perfection are directed by Divine guidance; but if or when God's hand is withdrawn, men left to themselves go astray, and the whole world reverts towards confusion and evil. This world-view, which we may call pendular, has kinships with the doctrine of eternal recurrence. It is also involved in Plato's approach to the abysmal problem of evil. That evil can in any way be attributed to God, Plato rejected emphatically as an impious error. God is the author of good and of good only. But there is in the constitution of the world a corrupt material strain, and in the very nature of things "there must always remain something which is antagonistic to good."—"God desired that all things should be good and nothing bad, so far as this was attainable;" but left to our own devices, we men let our lower impulses prevail.<sup>1</sup> In this Platonic perspective of theodicy the myth of the Golden Age expressed deep significance.

We noted the possible hint of hope in Hesiod's interposition of the Heroic Age between the Ages of Bronze and Iron. The legend of the Golden Age was given an optimistic turn in the prospect of its possible return, as in Vergil's *Fourth Eclogue*. This chant of divine restoration of mankind to a high estate was reinterpreted by Christian theologians in Messianic, Providential terms. A closer echo of Hesiod's myth in Roman poetry is found in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Ovid glorified especially the

<sup>1</sup>*Theaetetus*, 176; *Timaeus*, 30; transl. Jowett.



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primeval perfection of mankind: "Golden was that first age, which, with no one to compel, without a law, of its own will, kept faith and did the right."<sup>5</sup> He also sang in Latin verse the old story of the several ages, but proceeding from the silver and the brazen directly to our age of hard iron, in which "modesty and truth and faith fled the earth, and in their place came tricks and plots and snares, violence and cursed love of gain."<sup>6</sup>

The poetic vision of the return of the Golden Age was not only a vision of eventual restoration. It also mediated between the doctrine of cultural degeneration and the cyclic cosmology of eternal recurrence. This second doctrine finds many expressions throughout the entire course of Greek thought, from Heraclitus to Plotinus. Like a treadmill of cosmic spread and duration, the world process goes through the entire scale of possible conditions or events, and then returns to retrace its course to the least detail, aeon after aeon.

The basic idea of eternal recurrence was not exclusively or originally Greek. Its various versions may be studied in Babylonian, Brahmanic, and Buddhist cosmogonies. It stimulated the Oriental zeal for vastness and infinitude, of which Buddhism provided the most overwhelming expressions. The Buddhist *kalpas*, or aeons of world-destruction and world-restoration, were regarded as incalculable cosmic epochs, how incalculable, Buddhist speculation taxed its resources to conceive or imagine. Are we informed that the monsoon rains of the Bay of Bengal discharge in some four months thirty to forty *feet* of flood? The Buddhist imagined a downpour of three years' duration; the total sum of raindrops would still come short of the number of years in an *asankhyeya kalpa*. And these cosmic aeons return cyclically, marked by the alternate destruction and restoration of the world. Our folk tales begin with the familiar "once upon a time;" but the Buddhist legends were more expansive: "Ten quadrillion times a hundred quadrillions of *kalpas* ago, there lived a righteous king." A dim

<sup>5</sup>Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, I: 89ff., transl. F. J. Miller, Loeb Classical Library ed.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, lines 127ff.

recollection, and scarcely a faint hope!—yet Buddhist piety sought to sustain its serene prospect. Even though in this kalpa no lotus flower may appear on the primordial deep, and so no Buddha will come to teach men deliverance from misery, yet in some incredibly distant future, salvation and enlightenment will again return to wretched mankind. Even this brief passing mention of Oriental speculation may enable us to keep in mind the world-wide spread of the idea of eternal recurrence, as we consider more directly some of its Greek versions.

In Pre-Socratic philosophy the world course of eternal recurrence was conceived in pendular and in cyclical terms. Heraclitus viewed nature as a process of endless change of contending activities, as the opposition of upbuilding and down-going, all things arising from cosmic fire are in due course consumed by fire, worlds without end. Empedocles envisioned a similar counteraction of love and strife, or attraction and repulsion throughout the course of existence. But he seems to have entertained also a cyclical cosmogony and was a believer in the transmigration of souls. These two beliefs found strong support in the Pythagorean school. Pythagorean influence may be traced in Plato's advocacy of these doctrines, very definite in the case of transmigration, only occasional in the case of eternal recurrence. Aristotle also conceived of the course of existence in terms of circular motion, for it alone is continuous and in accord with his view of the world as eternal.<sup>7</sup> But while one could cite from Aristotle passages from which a cyclical doctrine could be surmised, he can scarcely be listed with the definite exponents of that belief.

In Post-Aristotelian philosophy, eternal recurrence is entertained by the Epicurean poet Lucretius, finds its active advocates among the earlier Stoics, and is viewed by Plotinus in a mystical perspective. Lucretius saw in nature a mechanical scrambling and unscrambling of material particles; the world is composed of atoms-in-motion-in-space. Thus everything is an impermanent combination or cluster of atoms; and since

<sup>7</sup>Cf. Aristotle, *De generatione et corruptione*, 337a.

the number of different combinations, no matter how vast, is yet exhaustible in eternity, there is bound to be recurrence and return, not only in general terms but in detail. To a truly cosmic survey, "all things are always the same: *eadem sunt omnia semper*."<sup>8</sup>

The Stoic sages were more explicit. Reviving the Heraclitean belief in a Cosmic Fire, which they exalted as Directive Reason and as Deity, they conceived of nature as a tension and a contention of refining and coarsening processes of material existence. When at long last a world epoch has gone through its round of possible conditions and events, it is all consumed in a cosmic conflagration, to start another world cycle recapitulating its predecessors to the least detail. A new Socrates, like so many before him immemorally, again has his trials with his shrewish wife Xantippe and his trial at court and his final cup of hemlock. These doctrines of cosmic conflagration and eternal recurrence were held by the early Greek Stoics; but they were abandoned by Panaetius, who introduced Stoicism into Rome; the Roman Stoics entertained not a cyclical but a linear view of the world process.

The doctrines of recurrence and rebirth were revived in the closing period of ancient thought by the Neopythagoreans and the Neoplatonists. The greatest thinker of that age, Plotinus, introduced these ideas into his mystical cosmology of divine emanation. Plotinus believed that the spiritual essence of man's soul was not extinguished along with his bodily disintegration. His assurance of personal immortality, like Plato's, was combined with a view of rebirth and transmigration of souls. In a larger cosmic setting, the repeated emanation of the Soul Principle in individual embodied souls was seen by Plotinus as an instance of the cyclical recapitulation of the vast cosmic process of Deity emanating in the three zones of existence: *Nous* or Rational Spirit, Soul, and Matter. The doctrine of Rational Divine Providence, which the Stoics fused subtly and strangely with their materialistic cosmology, was expressed by

<sup>8</sup>Lucretius, *De rerum natura*, III: 945.

Plotinus in unmistakably spiritual and religious terms. The ultimate reality for him was God, emanating radiant perfection throughout the universe at different levels of being.

The legend of the Golden Age and the mythology of world-degeneration yielded a dismal view, one excluding any historical advance. The doctrine of eternal recurrence in its various forms viewed the world process either as the cyclical recapitulation of the forms of material existence, or as the periodic reenactment of the drama of Divine Providence. All of these ideas may be regarded as ancient alternatives to the belief in historical progress. But while this last belief cannot be considered as dominant in Classical thought, approaches to it are not lacking, and some of these approaches are noteworthy.

The view of an upward curve or trend to betterment in the world, manifested especially in human activity, was naturally characteristic of the rationalists, but it is interesting to note that cultural advance was recognized and the term "progress" itself was used by the Epicurean poet Lucretius. Essential to all understanding of Epicureanism is a grasp of its strict materialism. Like Democritus and Epicurus, Lucretius recognized only atomic particles of matter moving in space, and he explained the nature of everything in terms of the atoms of which it was compounded, and their motions, contacts and collisions. No divine guidance was recognized here, no distinctively rational principles, no dominant or prevailing purposes and values. All is in a flux; the mechanics of nature are ever changing the composition of things, disintegrating and recombining the masses or clusters of atoms throughout existence. And besides this mechanical reassembling of particles, there is always the unaccountable power of each atom to swerve at any moment in any direction. In this world without plan, eternal duration would by the mere calculation of chances yield eventual recurrence, as has been noted. But how could it ever afford, let alone assure, genuine and reliable progress?

The thought of Lucretius at this point is versatile rather than consistent. The universal atomic whirl and pulsation are



not altogether random or chaotic. Under some conditions certain combinations persist or else are transformed in a definite direction. Driven by need or lured by use and advantage, men devised tools, perfected plans and methods which sustained them in what they possessed and opened to them still larger prospects of achievement. They found their place in nature and proceeded to fuller mastery of their territory. So, gradually in every field of activity, in farming and seafaring, in armament and legislation, in self-clothing and road-building, in all the arts, men step by step were taught by practice and mental activity to progress, *progredientes*, through time and by reason.<sup>9</sup> The acknowledgment of directive intelligence is surprising in the materialistic outlook of Lucretius.

The recognition of a genuinely progressive course in human affairs by the Classical philosophers of more or less rationalistic bent, while it was not dominant, was significant in view of the generally unhistorical outlook of ancient thought which we have been considering. In Plato's theory of Ideas the supreme reality is the Idea of Good or the Principle of Value and Prevailing Perfection. There is always evil, and lesser and lower values are always contending with the higher, for there must always be something antagonistic to good and to perfection; but there is also possible advance in knowledge and in the arts, and this advance can have no bounds. This view accentuates one aspect of Plato's idealism, and it can be and has been criticized as overemphasis. For all his exaltation of sovereign Reason, Plato's thought is marked by a deeply tragic conviction of our finitude and inconclusiveness in the assured mastery of values.

Aristotle was less dramatic about men. Without exaltation, he granted them some reach beyond their immediate grasp. Like Plato, he traced the degeneration of the state, but he also pointed out the path of social order and government towards more perfect realization of justice and general welfare. He did

<sup>9</sup>Cf. *De rerum natura*, V: 1448ff.

not proceed to any rigid conclusion of a final advance or decline, for while in any era some progress in the arts and crafts or knowledge or practice may be traced, the cycle of existence may sweep it all away, and, like Pandora's box, leave to man only hope.

For more explicit advocacy of human progress, we must turn to the Stoic sages of Rome who, be it remembered, did not entertain the doctrine of eternal recurrence held by their predecessors in the Athenian schools. Especially noteworthy here are Cicero and Seneca. Cicero recognized both progress and the obstacles to it in man's social relations and activities. "Man is the source of both the greatest help and the greatest harm to man."<sup>10</sup> Yet while in so many ways men are hampered and also corrupted by the societies in which they have to live their lives, it is in and through society that they can advance in knowledge and in the arts. "Without the association of men, cities could not have been built or peopled . . . laws and customs were established, and . . . the equitable distribution of private rights."<sup>11</sup> From small beginnings men proceed to larger gains and advantages, *progressionibus*. We should also seek to discover and further the development of which we are capable until it is fully attained.<sup>12</sup>

Seneca was even more explicit in his belief in social progress, yet he combined it with his Stoic austere advocacy of the simple rational life. He saw the simple virtues in the lives of bygone generations, and the retrospect inclined him to final resignation. But he also looked to further advance. So he wrote to Lucilius: We should emulate our forebears and advance as they did, going beyond them. Mankind is still in its infancy, and future ages will know clearly much that to us now seems a closed book. We should trust to sound thinking, for "life is the gift of the immortal gods, but living well is the gift of

<sup>10</sup>Cicero, *De officiis*, II: v, 17; transl. Walter Miller, Loeb Classical Library ed.

<sup>11</sup>*De officiis*, II: iv, 15.

<sup>12</sup>Cf. Cicero, *De finibus*, V: xxi; cited by A. O. Lovejoy and G. Boas, *Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity* (Baltimore, 1935), 248f.

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philosophy.<sup>13</sup> Seneca was also nostalgic in his reflections on the Golden Age, in his praise of the long past, in his revulsion at the luxuries and vulgarities of his age. And he viewed with deep concern the eventual dissolution of it all, in words recalling the earlier Stoic belief in a cosmic conflagration: "A single day will see the burial of all mankind . . . All that is famous and all that is beautiful, great thrones, great nations—all will descend into the one abyss, will be overthrown in one hour."<sup>14</sup>

Do we not observe repeatedly here a characteristic tension between recognition and exaltation of great values, and doubt and dismay about their final undoing? This tragic outlook may be noted in the greatest Greek poets. Two examples suffice. In Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*, the great culture hero recites with justified pride his noble services to mankind. His eloquent soliloquy reviews every field of activity in which he had led men from the savage burrows where they had groped like beasts, into the light of day: the light of skill and understanding and security and civilized life. But Aeschylus also portrays the titan Fire-Bringer as chained to a rock in the Caucasus. Great Zeus has condemned him; and his work for man, man's upward reach and progress, is doomed to ruin.

Akin to the Promethean tragedy is the "Hymn to Man" in the famous Chorus of the *Antigone*, one of the finest pages in Sophocles:

*Wonders are many, and none is more wonderful than man; the power that crosses the white sea, driven by the stormy south-wind, making a path under surges that threaten to engulf him; and Earth, the eldest of the gods, the immortal, the unwearied, doth he wear, turning the soil with the offspring of horses, as the ploughs go to and fro from year to year. And the light-hearted race of birds, and the tribe of savage beasts, and the sea-brood of the deep, he snares in the meshes of his woven toils, he leads captive, man*

<sup>13</sup>Seneca, *Epist. moral.*, xc: 1, transl. R. M. Gummere, Loeb Classical Library ed.

<sup>14</sup>Seneca, *Quaestiones naturales*, III: 29, cited in *The Idea of Progress*, G. H. Hildebrand, ed. (Berkeley, 1949), 106.

*excellent in wit. And he masters by his arts the beast whose lair is in the wilds, who roams the hills; he tames the horse of shaggy mane, he puts the yoke upon his neck, he tames the tireless mountain bull. And speech and wind-swift thought, and all the moods that mould a state, hath he taught himself; and how to flee the arrows of the frost, when 'tis hard lodging under the clear sky, and the arrows of the rushing rain; yea, he hath resource for all; without resource he meets nothing that must come: only against Death shall he call for aid in vain; but from baffling maladies he hath devised escapes. Cunning beyond fancy's dream is the fertile skill which brings him, now to evil, now to good. When he honours the laws of the land, and that justice which he hath sworn by the gods to uphold, proudly stands his city: no city hath he who, for his rashness, dwells with sin. Never may he share my hearth, never think my thoughts, who doth these things!*<sup>15</sup>

"Only against Death shall he call for aid in vain." This undertone in the "Hymn to Man" seems as tragic as in the culture paean of Prometheus. And the heroine of Sophocles is tragic indeed, with her utter commitment to the ageless laws of Heaven, and the doom to which her sublime devotion is bound. Yet the Chorus of Sophocles, just as the whole tragedy of *Antigone*, does not end on a note of despair. It is Platonic in its unwavering acknowledgment of the highest values, that they are the highest. They have no easy prevailing power in human lives and societies, but they alone have right; so how could they be ultimately futile?

<sup>15</sup>Sophocles, *Antigone*, lines 332ff., transl. R. C. Jebb.



## Review . . .

*Studies in Russian Epic Tradition*, second issue: Justinia Besharov, *Imagery of the Igor Tale in the Light of Byzantino-Slavic Poetic Theory*, published by E. J. Brill, Leiden, under the auspices of the Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, Harvard University 1956, vii, 155 pp.

A new and significant aspect of Byzantine cultural influence in Eastern Europe, particularly of the impact of Byzantine poetic theories on early Russian literature, is treated by Justinia Besharov in this second issue of the new publication, *Studies in Russian Epic Tradition*. Although it has long been generally recognized that Kievan Russian literature developed according to the literary patterns of Byzantine letters, it has usually been regarded by both Russian and Western scholars that Byzantine literary influence was transmitted to Kiev predominantly through Old Slavonic and Russian translations and readaptations of Byzantine writings. It has been considered that the poetic theories of Byzantine grammarians were unknown to Kievan authors, and while a reflection of Byzantine poetic devices is visible in early Russian literature, no serious attempt has been made until now to trace their development.

The discovery of the *Sviatoslav Codex of 1073*, which occurred some 150 years ago, did not shake this well-established conception, although this collection contained, along with some patristic writings, the "Treatise on Tropes and Figures" by George Choeroboscus, an early Byzantine rhetorician and grammarian. The *Codex* itself was a Bulgarian readaptation prepared in the early tenth century for the Bulgarian King Simeon from a Greek collection. In 1073 this miscellany was recopied for the Russian prince Sviatoslav from an unknown Bulgarian manuscript, and later enjoyed apparent success with Russian readers, for the *Codex* was recopied several times.

Some five years ago in an article devoted to the puzzles of the greatest Russian literary monument of the pre-Mongolian era, the *Igor Tale*, Professor Roman Jakobson pointed out for the first time that "early Russian writers learned their craft from Greek models, and not only from originals or translations but also from a Slavonic adaptation of Choeroboscus' treatise on poetic tropes and figures."<sup>1</sup> Professor Jakobson added that "it is worthwhile to examine and classify Old Russian poetic imagery in the light of this treatise, and some constructions that sound rather false to the contemporary scholar find their complete justification in the precepts of this Graeco-Slavonic manual."

<sup>1</sup>R. Jakobson, "The Puzzles of the Igor Tale," *Speculum*, 1952, XXVII, 44, and *La Geste du Prince Igor* (New York, 1948), 331.

Justinia Besharov, a talented student of Professor Jakobson, has accepted this suggestion and in the work under review has reexamined the entire poetic framework of the Igor Tale in the light of Choeroboscus' theories on tropes and figures. In the first part of the study Miss Besharov compares the Greek and Slavonic texts of Choeroboscus' treatise and finds that the original version was subjected by its Slavic adapter to a certain purge, reduction and clarification. It might be added that the text was purged entirely of all non-Biblical lay examples, and only quotations from the Holy Scripture were preserved. Miss Besharov states that it will forever be a matter of conjecture whether the author of the Igor Tale ever read the treatise, but she very correctly points out what is of greatest importance, that he "actualized" Choeroboscus' theories of figurative terms. The author of the Igor Tale endowed these figurative terms, these abstractions, "with a function: made them the instruments of composition." According to Besharov, there was already a "tradition of style" in Russia at that time—a parabolic, figurative style which required speaking in riddles. In this respect Besharov follows Professor Jakobson's theory that Russian literary development underwent the same pattern of development as that of contemporary Europe, as reflected in many Russian writings of the time such as "Lazarus in Hell" or "Supplication of Daniel the Exile."<sup>2</sup> Some Soviet scholars have attempted to deny the impact of such a style on the Igor Tale,<sup>3</sup> but in the opinion of this reviewer they can hardly refute the conclusions which Professor Jakobson and J. Besharov have drawn from a careful analysis of the style of the Igor Tale.

One of the strong and attractive points of Miss Besharov's work is her wide use in the study, along with illustrations from the Igor Tale and Choeroboscus' formulations, of abundant material from contemporary medieval letters, the Greek classic tradition, modern interpretations of medieval arts, and even from ancient Russian plastic arts. For instance, in interpreting the promise of the author of the Igor Tale to tell "his mighty tale in mighty words," Miss Besharov does not shun a comparison of Igor's challenge to Fate with that of Achilles, and of the anonymous author's affiliation with the famous Russian singer Bojan to Homer's descent from Apollo. "The whole continuity of mightiness in song and valor is as if gathered up and projected in the single homely epithet, *vnuk* (grandson)." Similar circumstances create similar associations and development. In another place Miss Besharov applies H. Focillon's observation on poetics and specifically medieval poetic styles: "To the poet, in the same way that an abstraction is visualized, the past is

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>3</sup>Professor D. Likhachev's review of J. Besharov's book in *Izvestija Akademii Nauk SSSR, Otdelenie jazyka i literatury* (1956), 549-552.



## *Imagery of the Igor Tale*

present, not recollection." (p. 55) She explains the entire poetic system of the Tale in terms of the *Weltanschauung* and background of the medieval man, whose poetic world was not a realm of pure perception achieving the complete fusion of image and concept, but the realm of consistently used symbolism. The same image, the same thought can be presented in a variety of forms, and the same words change semantically and are conditioned by circumstances of events and developments. Says Besharov, "This merging of time with eternity on the plane of legend is intimated in the exordium by the suggestive use of grammatical tenses." (p. 80) The author of the Tale, for example, uses various tenses—perfect, imperfect, aorist and present—not for the purpose of determining the chronological sequence but primarily, according to Besharov's explanation, for the purpose of expressing various degrees of immediacy. The medieval poet, a narrator of the past, actually presented the past as a part of the present. So, for instance, the main personages of the Igor Tale, Russian princes, are presented according to Besharov's interpretation, as "the princes of preceding ages . . . [who] come to life not in their historical setting but as the personages of an irrational world of song and story, caught in the power of metamorphosis as inexorably as the swan in the falcon's talons and conjured up at will by magic fingers and witching strings." (p. 79)

The falcons, traditional Russian symbols of bravery, take the reader or hearer of the Tale into the world of pure ornamentation. Besharov carefully traces the symbol of the falcon in folklore, in illuminated manuscripts and in the tympanium of King David's church, and remarks that "what had been rendered through paint and stone is now reiterated in words . . ." (p. 57) Instead of color the poet uses sound, i.e. the repetition of *s* and *o*, for the purpose of embellishing his images.

Besharov offers an interesting interpretation of the poet's use of the words "*Rusici*," "*Russkii synove*" (Russia's sons) with "*deti Besovy*" (children of the Devil) (p. 56): the juxtaposition of Russians and pagans. The feeling of Russia's exclusive selection by God for inclusion in the world of Orthodoxy can be observed in the earliest Russian monuments,<sup>4</sup> and the dualistic opposition of metaphysical good and evil, of the world of Christ and that of Evil, played an important role in the entire evolution of the Russian mind.

Examples of Besharov's inventiveness in her explanation of the poetic system of the Tale are extremely numerous and in the great majority of cases convincing. It can be regretted that the author of this excellent analysis of Russia's most outstanding medieval artistic

<sup>4</sup>For instance, Primary Chronicle, year 1093; see *Povest' vremennykh let* (Moscow, 1950), 147.

work did not use in addition examples from the wealth of early Russian literature nor from the allegoric world of Russian and Scythian animalistic imagery, both of which would be of the greatest help in such a study of artistic ornamentation and symbolism and could contribute to an explanation of the figures in the Igor Tale.

Miss Besharov does not limit her investigation to an interpretation of the Tale's symbolism. She classifies the poetic figures of the work according to Choeroboscus' system and shows that a large number of them fit into his theoretic framework. A major question remains unanswered by Miss Besharov, however. All the figures and tropes of the Slavonic version of Choeroboscus' treatise are illustrated solely by Biblical examples and, as mentioned above, the treatise was carefully purged of all pagan and lay embellishments. The Igor Tale, on the other hand, is the creation of a basically lay, non-clerical and non-religious mind which widely reflects the pagan tradition of pre-Christian Russia. Therefore the question arises whether this treatise, based in the Slavonic version on purely Christian symbolism, could be so integrally reinterpreted and "actualized" in a heroic and a-religious epic.

But neither this unanswered question nor some not wholly convincing interpretations of the Igor Tale's symbolism in the least diminish the capital importance of this book. Miss Besharov has done a splendid pioneering work in interpreting early Russian poetry in the light of Medieval mentality. Future students of early Russian poetics in particular, and of Medieval literature in general, will profit greatly from the fruits of her research.

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